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32

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What we're playing:

Grand Prix Legends (email Ben if you live in Sydney and want to race via modem/net!), Railroad Tycoon II, Paintball, silly buggers, Fallout 2, FIFA 99, Xenogears

The Game of Life



Do games really need ethics, honour and a 'message'? I was talking with the producers of Abe's Oddysee a couple of days ago, these guys really wanted to create a powerful story rich in moral lessons, with the gameplay an equal priority, thankfully.

They have too, the latest

Oddworld game - Abe's Exoddus, has some very obvious parallels with real-life problems. Simply, Abe must rally the oppressed workers together to rise up against their thoroughly evil bosses. It goes much deeper too, said evil bosses keep the workers in order by providing beer to keep them numb and content. The beer was free at first, then once the workers were hooked, the price was upped so the beer was all they ended up working for.

It's a classic story, one that has been told countless times before - most notable, probably, Aldous Huxley's mind-blowing Brave New World.

But are we being hit unsuspectingly with a big moral hammer when all we expected was a fun platform game? Richard Garriot's Ultima series lays the morality on thick - but in the case of these games it's all very much in context - knights, honour, chivalry and classic heroism.

It's all a good thing; provided game developers don't, en masse, begin to see themselves as our moral saviours. My only concern is that the focus may shift away from the gameplay. We play games to escape from the often ugly blows reality deals us - same reason we go to the movies or read books. It's only natural that games as a medium are used as a vehicle for messages of righteousness. In the case of Abe's,

the gameplay is so strong that many gamers miss the obvious messages. They are not subliminal! Abe's hits you in the face with its morality, yet still most gamers miss the point. Which is good, as with a great novel or movie, it's only in the analysis in the end that these things become clear. We don't sit around and chat about this though, as we do after a movie, so often the carefully crafted story is overlooked.

Now that kids apparently don't read much anymore :{, I suppose then that we need to teach them the life-lessons they need via games. Only, game developer people, please keep it buried just below the surface so we can fool ourselves into thinking that were having fun, not learning.

Ben Mansill
Editor



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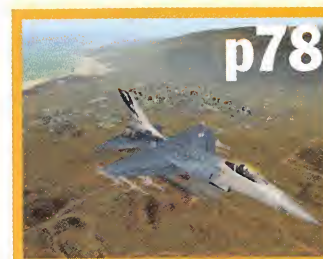
The RTS innovators look to take their next game to the next level.

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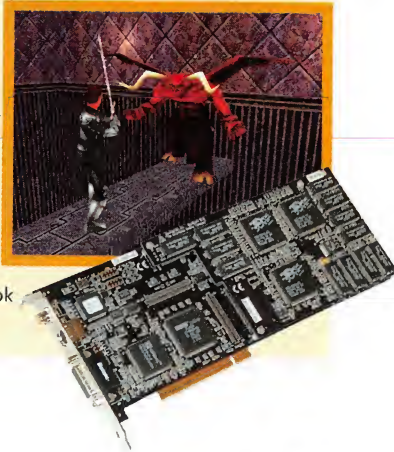
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Railroad Tycoon was the World's First RTS - and how hard did it rock! We loved it, here's why.



THE LEGEND



The most detailed terrain ever



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Bristling with thousands of enemies



Mission builder gives you control



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R E D E F I N E D .

"Because of its persistent drive for accuracy Falcon 4.0 provides a closer than ever before impression of what it is actually like to fly a modern jetfighter."

PC Gaming World

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CD GUIDE

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CD #32

Starting the PC PowerPlay CD

This month's demo CD is jam packed with the latest demos. To begin, insert the CD into the CD drive and click the RUNME file to start. The menu is easy to use. Simply click on the option you want, whether it's Games, Utilities or Patches and another menu will appear. Browse through the menu options and click on the program you want to install.



cdtech@powerplay.next.com.au

Faulty CDs will be replaced free of charge. Send it, together with a description of the error, to:

PC PowerPlay CD Returns

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The Games

101st Airborne in Normandy

Empire Interactive

Genre: Strategy [Turn Based]

\games\101air\setup.exe

Lead a squad of 18 paratroopers behind enemy lines in this strategy-based simulation of squad level combat based on the D-Day landings in Normandy.

Controlling everything from attacks on the enemy to finding your next meal, 101: The 101st Airborne in Normandy is the thinking man's skirmish combat.

Requirements

Minimum: P90, 16 MB, SVGA

Recommended: P133, 32 MB, SVGA 2MB

As a member of Delta Force, The Army's top secret elite Special Forces unit, you will conduct missions swiftly and silently, in every possible terrain, under every imaginable condition and by any means necessary.

Requirements

Minimum: P166, 32 MB, SVGA

Recommended: P200, 64 MB, SVGA 2MB

Future Cop LAPD

Electronic Arts

3D Shooter

\games\fcop\fcop.exe

Los Angeles is one rough place to serve and protect, but you won't be patrolling the streets alone. The TAC X-1 Alpha, a revolutionary miracle of modern science - durable, armed to the teeth, and capable of handling the worst the crime lords have to offer. This advanced piece of hardware has the ability to trans-

Delta Force

Novalogic

1st Person Shooter

\games\df\setup.exe

Age of Empires: The Rise of Rome

Microsoft

Strategy [Real Time]

\games\aoe\msaoex.exe

The Age of Empires Expansion: The Rise of Rome is the highly anticipated add-on to the award-winning, best-selling real-time strategy game Age of Empires. Focussing on the legendary Roman Empire, the Rise of Rome will challenge veterans and novices alike to wage war on an epic scale with four additional civilizations, several unique units, new technologies, and new campaigns, including the showcase campaign that focusses on the Rise of Rome itself. Gather your forces, a new Age will be upon us. Age of Empires Expansion Trial includes:

- One single player campaign that

has three scenarios, two of the new civilizations (Carthaginian and Roman), the new Roman buildings, three of the new units, and the four new technologies. To play the campaign scenarios, start the game, click Single Player, click Campaign, and then click the scenario to play.

- One four-player multiplayer map using the new Mediterranean map type and including two of the new civilizations (Carthaginian and Roman). To play the multiplayer game, start the game, click Multiplayer, and then follow the instructions on the game screen.

Requirements

Minimum: P90, 16 MB, SVGA

Recommended: P166, 32 MB, SVGA 2MB





form into two unique vehicles: the Walker and the Hovercraft. And if you plan on a lengthy career with the force, you've gotta take advantage of the strengths of each.

Requirements

Minimum: P90, 32 MB, SVGA 2MB

Recommended: P166, 64 MB, SVGA 4MB, 3D Hardware

Grand Touring Cars

Elite Systems LTD
Driving Simulation

\games\gt\gt.exe

Grand Touring represents the ultimate in accelerated action — the white-knuckle thrills of high-speed Grand Touring racing, coded specifically for the explosive graphics processing power of today's hottest 3D accelerator cards. Just add 3D acceleration to turn your PC into a high-end racing experience, whether you're primed for burning arcade action or planning to win a full racing season.

Requirements

Minimum: P2-233, 32 MB, SVGA, 3D Hardware

Recommended: P2-266, 64 MB, SVGA 2MB, 3D Hardware

Madden NFL 99

EA Sports
Sports [Football]

\games\madden\setup.exe

Madden NFL 99's super hi-res polygon graphics and new motion captured animations deliver real NFL action on all platforms. See, hear, and feel the impact as you perform authentic

NFL jukes, pump fakes, sideline grabs, and monster hits.

Requirements

Minimum: P133, 16 MB, SVGA

Recommended: P200, 32 MB, SVGA 2MB, 3D Hardware

Microsoft Baseball 3D 1998

Microsoft

Sports [Baseball]

\games\bb\install.exe

Want to know what it's like to have a 96-mph fastballer staring you down? How about a burly 50-HR hitter strutting to the plate to reject your best stuff? Baseball 3D is real Major League Baseball through and through. The graphics scream it, and the gameplay confirms it

Requirements

Minimum: P133, 16 MB, SVGA 2 MB

Recommended: P200, 32 MB, SVGA 4MB

Monaco Grand Prix Racing Simulation 2

Ubi Soft

Simulation [Driving]

\games\mgp\mgprs_d6.exe

Monaco Grand Prix Racing Simulation 2 pushes the limits of gameplay realism forward by offering exciting new game modes, 3D effects and unprecedented customization. The game will not only simulate the race, but everything about the racing world

Keys :

Arrow Keys - Direction

F1 - Help

F2 - Playable View

F3 - Roving Camera View

F4 - Different Car Views

F5 - Current Placing

F6 - Swerve

F7 - Manual/Auto Gearbox

F8 - Following Opponent



Knights & Merchants

TopWare

Strategy [Real Time]

\games\kandm\demo_120.exe

A fascinating mix of economy simulation and real-time strategy, Knights and Merchants recreates the era of the European Middle Ages. But this isn't just about fairy tales and fabled creatures. The player takes on the role of a captain in the palace guard, entrusted with rebuilding a kingdom destroyed by a rebellion, and returning the wise king to his rightful place on the throne.

Requirements

Minimum: P133, 16 MB, SVGA

Recommended: P166, 32 MB, SVGA 2MB

F9 - Preceding Opponent

H - Display Active Cars

P - Pause

Enter - Pit Entry Sign

TAB - Pit Lane Speed Limit

Shift M - MIP Mapping Tools

Requirements

Minimum: P133, 16 MB, SVGA, 3D Hardware

Recommended: P200, 32 MB, SVGA 2MB, 3D Hardware

ODT

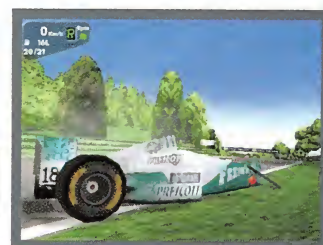
Psygnosis

Adventure

\games\odt\odt.exe

Disease is rampant, the city of Calli is dying, and no modern medicines can help. People are dying and the plague has reached epidemic proportions; science has turned to religion.

Ancient texts refer to a magical gem, called the Green Pearl. It's the only hope, and returning it home is your only mission. Your boss, Captain Lamat, has assembled a team; a highly trained crew of four specialists that just might have what it will take to pull this risky mission off. Finding the pearl was the easy part: keeping it is another story. On the flight back to Calli your ship crash lands in a place known as the Forbidden Zone, a quarantined area full of diseased



Blood 2: The Chosen

GT Interactive

3D Shooter

\games\b2demo\setup.exe

In a time of turmoil and decay, a dark organisation with a dark purpose casts its shadow over the world. As their cause begins to reach fruition, an even greater evil pushes its twisted being at the bindings of reality. But across a century of pain, through an army

built on hate and fear, and over the bodies of those he loved, Death has never died. In 1998, Caleb returns. And this time he's not alone.

Requirements

Minimum: P166, 32 MB, SVGA, 3D Hardware

Recommended: P266, 32 MB, SVGA 2MB, 3D Hardware





mutants who desire the pearl for themselves. The pearl has been lost in the crash...your ship has been rendered useless...your mission has been altered. Find the pearl, escape, Or Die Trying.

Hints & Tips for playing the demo:

- Press F1 during the game to see help on the controls
- Customise your character by distributing experience (use the TAB key)
- Call up the inventory and customise your weapons (use the SPACE key to choose your Ammo)
- Call up the spell inventory (PAGE DOWN key) to check your magic
- Note that launching spells will cost you MANA (the purple gauge)
- Note that using weapons will cost you AMMO (there are four kinds in the game: Light, Fire, Ionic, Fusion)
- Try to pick up power ups to improve your weapons
- Try to pick up some new spells to improve your magic ability

Requirements

Minimum: P120, 16 MB, SVGA
Recommended: P200, 32 MB, SVGA 2MB, 3D Hardware

Snow Wave Avalanche

Midas Interactive
Winter Sports

`\games\snow\snow.exe`

Snow Wave: Avalanche introduces us to one of the most spectacular and enjoyable winter sports at this moment: SNOWBOARDING. With Snow Wave: Avalanche you will be able to enjoy giddy descents among the frozen crags and canyons, performing terrifying jumps into space and incredible acrobatics worthy of a real champion.



Requirements

Minimum: P133, 16 MB, SVGA
Recommended: P200, 32 MB, SVGA 2MB

Tiger Woods 99

EA Sports

Sports [Golf]

`\games\tiger\tiger99.exe`

He has changed the way the game is played on the golf course. Now, Tiger Woods is changing the way golf is played on the computer. Monster drives, chipping with a 3-wood, snaking putts the length of the yellow brick road. Here's Tiger in all his fist pumping, crowd jumping, pure adrenaline glory.

Requirements

Minimum: P133, 32 MB, SVGA
Recommended: P200, 64 MB, SVGA 2MB, 3D Hardware

Wargasm

DID

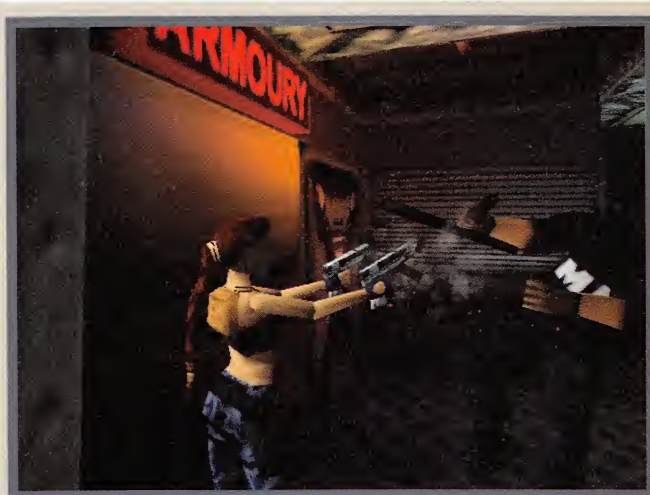
Action

`\games\wargasm\wargasm.exe`

Technology has brought the end of bloodshed but not the end of war. Now the battlespace is cyberspace - and it looks and feels every bit as violent as the real thing. To the winner goes the spoils of war - the state of Wargasm.

Requirements

Minimum: P166, 16 MB, SVGA
Recommended: P200, 32 MB, SVGA 2MB, 3D Hardware



Tomb Raider 3

Eidos Interactive
Adventure

`\games\raider3\raider3.exe`

Tomb Raider III unfolds in a much more non-linear fashion than Lara's previous adventures. Lara will once again span the globe from the arctic pole to the islands of the South Pacific.

Keys

Up - Run

Down - Back

Left - Left

Right - Right

. - Duck
. - dash
shift - walk
alt - jump
ctrl - action
space - arm
/ - flare
pad o - look
end - roll
esc - inventory
Requirements

Minimum: P200, 16 MB, SVGA
Recommended: P266, 32 MB, SVGA 2MB, 3D Hardware



Shogo

Monolith

1st Person Shooter

`\games\sh\shogodem.exe`

Combine gigantic Mobile Combat Armor with little annoying soldiers and what do you get? SQUISH! Shogo: Mobile Armor Division invites you to strap yourself into a multi-tonne, heavily armoured, armed to the teeth MCA that moves like quicksilver but destroys like a wrecking ball. Or take a leisurely walk through a heavily guarded enemy facility with just your wits and a pistol in each fist. Experience jaw-dropping visuals and pulse-pounding special effects in this anime inspired masterpiece that showcases the highly acclaimed LithTech 3D game engine.

Requirements

Minimum: P133, 32 MB, SVGA, 3D Hardware
Recommended: P200, 64 MB, SVGA 2MB, 3D Hardware



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Utilities

3DMark 99

3DMark 99 - The Gamers' Benchmark is a diagnostic suite that analyzes, tests and reports your system's 3D performance. 3DMark tells how to maximize Your 3D performance by producing one easy to understand result from a balanced testing methodology that includes image quality, rendering speed, CPU capability and an Internet information base.

Anti-Viral Toolkit Pro 32-bit 3.0

Complete prevention, detection, and elimination of thousands of computer viruses and trojan horse programs. Virus scans recursively within ZIP, ARJ, RAR, and many other compressed programs too. Detects and removes MACRO VIRUS-ES. Heuristic virus scanning engine detects 80% of new "unknown" viruses.

CompuPic 32-bit 4.0 build 950

CompuPic's sophisticated features, unparalleled image display quality and speed offer the power to satisfy the experienced

graphics enthusiast, while its intuitive Windows-based user interface makes it easy to use for the beginner.

ImageCast IC3 32-bit 3.0

ImageCast IC3 is the most versatile hard drive duplication tool in world. Cloning takes the work out of multiple machine set ups. ImageCast IC3 enables you to multicast to hundreds of PCs simultaneously, or send a standalone image to any network drive.

Mellosofttron 32-bit 2.5

The Mellosofttron is a low latency, fully programmable virtual sampler. In short, it turns your PC into a sampler which you can play live with a MIDI keyboard, with a sequencer or with any MIDI file player. You can edit all instrument patches and create new ones from scratch using your own WAVs as sound sources.

MemTurbo 32-bit 1.0a

MemTurbo increases your sys-

tem performance by making more RAM available for your applications and the operating system. It also defragments your physical RAM, increasing the efficiency of your CPU and Motherboard caches.

MemTurbo also recovers memory leaks from poorly behaved applications and flushes unused libraries and DLLs temporarily out to disk, making more room for your favourite games or applications.

Planet.Keeper 32-bit 3.02

Planet.Keeper is the ultimate solution to those vanishing codes! Through its unique interface, you can enter and retrieve ANY type of password you want along with an identifying name, description and login for each record. When you need that password again later, you are just one touch away from it.

Thumbs Plus 32-bit 4.0

ThumbsPlus is a graphic file viewer, locator and organiser which simplifies the process of

finding and maintaining graphics, clip-art files, fonts and animations. It displays a small image (thumbnail) of each file. You can use ThumbsPlus to browse, view, edit, crop, launch external editors, and copy images to the clipboard.

UltraEdit 32-bit 6.0

A really good text editor with almost every feature you could want. Some of its many features include: Disk based text editing - No limit on file size, minimum RAM used even for multi-megabyte files, Column mode editing!!! Insert columns/ HEX Find, Replace and Replace All, Multiple files open and displayed at the same time, and more.

Winzip 7.0

A great utility for zipping and unzipping files. This is an absolute must if you want to uncompress zipped files you download from the internet or elsewhere. It has "wizards" which will help novice users with some of the more complicated tasks.

Internet

AutoWinNet 95 32-bit 5.5

Automated Internet for Windows95/NT. Allows scheduling of common tasks for untended operation.

Hotmail Express

Access your Hotmail account through your own Email Software. POP Access to your Hotmail account allows you to download your Hotmail to your

own PC using Email software such as Netscape Mail, Eudora, MS Outlook or Pegasus as well as most other popular Email client software packages.

InfoSeek Express 32-bit 1.06

For people who search the Web frequently and want to use it more efficiently, Express by Infoseek is a next-generation desktop search product

that brings multiple search and information sources together in one place. With Express you can find, explore, and do anything on the Internet faster and easier than before.

Pagoo 32-bit 3.0

Pagoo is a new revolutionary way to communicate between you and your friends. Pagoo is a FREE unique service that delivers phone calls to a users desktop while they are online. Is it always impossible for your friends to contact you because your phone line is always busy? You are browsing the web too much! Now, they can call the Pagoo center using any phone and leave a message that you will receive directly on your desktop a few seconds later.

PATCHES

This month's patches section includes:

Age Of Empires
Black Dahlia
Dungeon Keeper
Dominion
Dark Reign
F22
Final Fantasy 7
Freespace
Hexen 2
Jedi Knight
Knights & Merchants
MAX 2
Mech Commander
Myth
Overseer
StarCraft
Unreal
Ultimate Race Pro
War Games
Xwing Vs Tie Fighter

AOL Internet Services

AOL is one of the easiest to use, most convenient Internet online service in the world. It gives you the Internet and Much More.

Of course you can surf the web - in fact, everything you can do on the web you can do on AOL. In addition, there's a world of exclusive content and community on AOL that is not on the Internet. This month we are offering you 100 free hours to get acquainted with AOL...



CD EXTRA

Special bonus CD - Aureal A3D demo

To celebrate the release of A3D V2.0 and the Vortex 2 soundchip, Aureal have provided us, and you, with their A3D Demo CD.

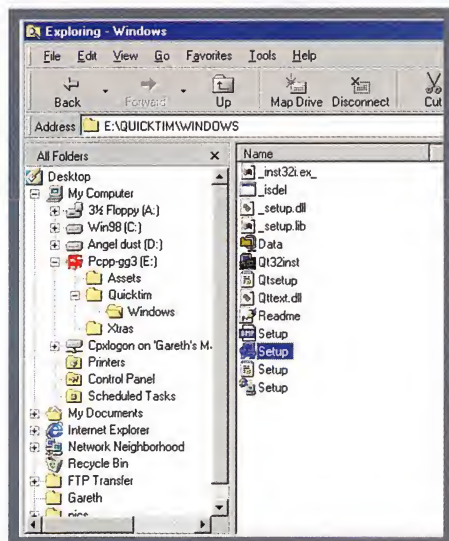
The beauty of this demo CD is that you don't actually need an A3D compatible card to use it. Instead, this is intended to emulate for you the experience of owning an A3D sound card.

The reason this is possible is that A3D works on the fact that because we can hear sounds 3 dimensionally in the real world with only 2 ears, it must be possible to create sounds from 2 speakers that have the same effect.

As the sound on the CD has been recorded accurately from an A3D card, they will play back correctly. As you will hear, it is indeed a very impressive format.

Installation

- In order to install the demos, insert the A3D CD into your CDROM.
- Open it by double clicking on your CD ROM icon found in the "My Computer" folder.
- Next, install Quicktime onto your machine. If you already have Quicktime installed on your machine, jump to the next step, otherwise install it by following these instructions.
- Double click on the folder "QUICKTIME
- Now double click on the folder named "Windows"
- Double click on "setup.exe" to start the installation process.
- When the installation is over, locate your CDROM folder and press the "UP" button on the toolbar twice to return to the root directory.



- Once Quicktime has been installed on your machine, it's time to start the demo. To do this double click "starter.exe" from the root directory of the CDROM.

Using the program interface

Navigating around the demo shouldn't present you with any problems. Simply click on the function that interests you.

From the top of the screen, you can access:

Experience A3D

This will run a series of AVI's that demonstrate A3D sound effects within a series of games.

A3D Games

This is a list of some better known games that feature A3D support with comments from reviewers around the world.

A3D Hardware

This is a rundown of all the different hardware manufacturers that are incorporating A3D support into their PC's.



A3D Lab

This is a series of selectable demos where A3D spatial, reverb, reflection and other effects can be sampled, and compared to straight stereo.

Aureal

Information regarding the Aureal company, their history and their goals.

Clicking Home will return you to the Main menu.

Clicking Quit will return you to the desktop.

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Prizes!

Oooohhh... It's a good one this month! Thanks to VideoLogic, the following goodies are up for grabs to New Subscribers or Renewers:

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WIN PRIZES WORTH ALMOST \$2000

Read up on the Sirocco on page 24 for the full glory on this mother, or soak up the following short version:

Sirocco is simply the best dedicated gaming sound system ever created. That's a fact. Sirocco is true audiophile equipment, but for gamers.

- Fully active amplifier system with five amps, one per speaker cone, with signal splitting at the input/preamp stage and each amp optimized for its specific frequency range.

- Power Supply- Dual rail toroidal C-core transformer with 28000 microfarads of smoothing capacitance providing straight line power.

- Attitude control- Dual shelving filter for mid/high frequency tone adjustment, plus and minus 6dB range. The Attitude control maintains the integrity of the entire frequency response curve and works by moving 1Khz either side of the mid point and moving the entire bass and treble lines in opposite direc-

tions, increasing bass while decreasing treble and vice versa.

- Wood construction MDF cabinets with magnetically shielded drivers.
- Exceptional THD figures: Less than 0.01% at 1KHz and nominal output 1% at 80 watt RMS all channels driven.
- All speaker cones by Audax, the leading British manufacturer and supplier to the HiFi industry such as Goodman, KEF and others.
- They're black!

PLUS! We're also giving away a pile of VideoLogic's brand new **Sonic Storm Pro** sound cards to make it all complete.

1st prize: 1 VideoLogic Sirocco Gaming Hi Fi PLUS 1 VideoLogic Sonic Storm Pro sound card.

4 x runner up prizes: VideoLogic Sonic Storm Pro sound card.

Tempting stuff, eh? We know, we're evil like that... Do it!

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SIDELINES

Benchmarks everywhere have been rejoicing, for finally a non-proprietary 3D benchmarking program has been released to the public. Futuremark Corporation's 3DMark 99 uses Remedy Entertainment's 3D engine 'MAX-FX' to measure Direct3D performance of a system. We've included the 'Lite' version (when are these people going to learn how to spell, dammit?) on this month's cover CD to cover all your benchmarking needs. The 'Pro' version, available for purchase and download from www.3dmark.com comes with full capabilities, including advanced display settings, high-resolution modes and increased colour options.

Microsoft have pretty much cemented their position as the pre-eminent OS corporation for the home and business market, and they're making significant inroads into many other markets as well, with their line of mice, keyboards, game controllers, game software - and now they're moving into speaker systems. The Digital Sound System 80 is a 3 piece combo kit, consisting of 2 satellite speakers and one subwoofer, and comes with a built in digital amplifier and both digital and analogue inputs. Interestingly, the DSS 80 is one of the first speaker systems to make use of the USB interface, and doesn't require the use of a sound-card, with proprietary software allowing for a 10 band equaliser and volume controls included with the system.

The trend for animated feature movies continues, with the news that Square's Final Fantasy series is about to get the movie treatment. Square has recently announced that they have signed a deal with Columbia Pictures to make Final Fantasy: The Movie, which should be released sometime in 2001. Square already has more than 100 employees hard at work on the movie, including scriptwriter Al Reinert (Apollo 13), and is being billed as the first ever movie to use purely computer generated graphics for every character in the movie (we have our doubts about this).

Fallout 2 had only just been completed, but Fallout creator Tim Cain has already announced his next project - and it's not with By-Gamers-For-Gamers-Interplay. The core team for Fallout, including Tim Cain, Leonard Boyarsky, and Jason Anderson have created their own company called Troika Games and signed a deal with Sierra Studios for their next game. Surprisingly enough, the first game for Troika will be an RPG, and not a D&D fantasy based one either. "This is the game I've been waiting 15 years to make" says Cain. So what was Fallout and Fallout 2 then? Just warmups for his master project? Impressive!

VOODOO 3 DEMONSTRATED AT COMDEX

3Dfx have just stirred up a hornets nest at Comdex with the demonstration of the Voodoo 3 board, something they had managed to keep extremely quiet up until now.

Currently codenamed the "Avenger", 3Dfx are set to release in June of 1999. The Voodoo 3 will be a 2D/3D combo card and will come in 2 forms - the Voodoo3 2000 (aimed at the OEM market) and Voodoo3 3000 (for retail release).

The 2D portion of the Voodoo 3 features a dedicated high speed 128-bit interface and an internal 256-bit data path. The most exciting aspect of Voodoo 3000 2D is that the Windows 9x GUI is accelerated at the hardware level and has already passed Microsoft's Windows Hardware Quality Labs certification.

The 2000 runs a RAMDAC of 300MHz with a 125MHz on board bus and the 3000 has a RAMDAC of 350MHz with a

183MHz on board bus - with a maximum refresh rate of 2048x1538 at 75Hz (WOW!). 3Dfx are already unsatisfied with this and are working on upping to a 200MHz SGRAM bus version.

The 3000 is targeted to be AGP 2X, however there's still no DME (using on-board memory for textures). 3Dfx can be thoroughly excused though, because with the number of triangles that flow through this card even AGP 4X (which the 3000 will support) wouldn't be able to keep up.

In terms of 3D, the 3000 has a fill rate of over 366 megatexels per second and can handle 7 million triangles per second, allowing for resolutions of 1280x1024@60 fps. That's over 100 billion operations per second!

3Dfx have learnt from their Banshee mistakes and the 3000 will feature dual TMUs for single pass multi texturing, including true hardware bump-mapping, anti-aliasing (edge and



super sample), full hardware triangle setup, all fog and lighting effects and, wait for it; proprietary texture compression.

The only spanner in the works is 3Dfx's old nemesis - image quality. They haven't as yet been able to change the architecture to allow for 32-bit colour. The Voodoo 3 continues with 32-bit internal rendering, but dithers it down to 16-bit colour (22 bit colour with texture compression). Perhaps 3Dfx will rectify this by release.

Irrespective, the Voodoo 3 is going to be twice as fast as a Riva TNT and offer hardware DVD, plus more hardware accelerated 3D than any other card. The "Avenger" is indeed an apt name.

VULCAN FURY ON HOLD, & TRIBAL DREAMS CANNED

Interplay, long known as the company "By gamers, for gamers" has announced that the Star Trek adventure game, 'Secret of Vulcan Fury' has been put on an "indefinite hiatus". Vulcan Fury has been in development at the Tribal Dreams studios (a division of Interplay) for a long time, and is based on a story penned by famous Trek

writer D.C. Fontana. Interplay's marketing director Kirk Green said that Vulcan Fury "has not been killed, but we're not progressing with any development and the development team has been laid off", and that "at a later date we could decide to restart it up again or absolutely just end it then".

Interplay's reasoning, accord-

ing to Green, was that "Vulcan Fury is a cash-intensive product. We're trying to watch our bottom line". Green also confirmed the news that Tribal Realms, Interplay's adventure games division had closed down and that all staff had been dismissed, making a total of 500 employees laid off company-wide.

The closures and layoffs come

on the heels of Interplay announcing fairly dismal third quarter earnings, but this 'belt-tightening' doesn't necessarily indicate that Interplay are in serious trouble. With high profile games like Baldur's Gate, Fallout 2, Messiah, and Earthworm Jim 3D out now or due for release soon, they should see an improvement in their financial sphere next year.



NewsWire

UK

Steve Boxer

The usual sense of excitement mixed with nervousness prevails over here, as the games industry gears up for the Christmas free-for-all. General consensus states that this is by no means a great year-end for games, with a general lack of huge, ground-breaking blockbusters and an even bigger list of Christmas absentees than usual.

Still, at least we've got Half-Life, which has simply blown everyone away, along with some less heralded surprise gems, such as Wargasm and (once you start getting to grips with it) Gangsters. And then, of course, there's Tomb Raider III. Whatever you may think about the game (and Core, as usual, has kept it under tighter wraps than a gnat's chuff), it's about to be marketed to shit, with a worldwide budget of £10 million, and Lara due to appear on drinks cans and the cover of a national newspaper in

Germany, and even in a Seat car ad in France...

Other high-profile Christmas party-poopers include Duke Nukem Forever, Trespasser (which Microsoft has dropped like a hot potato, and whose demo disks have generated an unprecedented amount of derision)...

The Carmageddon II: Carpocalypse Now saga rumbles on, with the green-blooded zombie version now in the shops and full-goriness patches freely available on the Internet. SCI is preparing to do exactly what it did with the original; that is, heading to the European Court for an over-riding 18 certificate, which it will surely win. Calls for a new method of game certification, performed by a body which has at least minimal knowledge of the world of games rather than just films, are intensifying as a result...

NewsWire

US

Don St. John

The games, they're rolling in by the dozens, and of course so are the bugs. Hey, there are always some minor glitches that are patchable, but this season's "winner" seems to be Star Trek: Klingon Honor Guard from Microprose. Reports of level-end crashes are rife, even with the 1.1 patch that's meant to bring KHG's Unreal engine up to Net multiplayer snuff.

The whole bug thing is too depressing, though, so let's move on to the good news on US shores. For a change, it's not a software title that's the buzz here, and rightly so. Instead, 3Dfx's announcement of the Voodoo3 card—only a few months away now—should have you ignoring mere game titles and blowing off those extra pints to make sure you can snap this baby up the second it hits store shelves.

Assuming 3Dfx crosses all the t's and dots all the i's - and to date, their track record has been solid (if you ignore the early Voodoo Rush hassles), the Voodoo3 will blow all our minds even more than the

Banshee has. Let's skip the heavy techie detail and get to the basic number you want: 60 frames per second...at 1280x1024. Even without an expansion to 32-bit color (maybe next time), this card makes your PC the center of your entertainment life.

At some point, the hardware curve for gaming *has* to level out, but that's not going to happen for a long while yet. Meanwhile, it's clear that the best strategy that you, as a committed gamer, can employ is to assume that half your money needs to go to hardware upgrades - a new CPU every 2 years at most, and video cards once a year. The next generation of sound cards should have MP3 engines within the year, with the best games blowing off MIDI samples (even with their minimal size) and moving to DVD to give you wild sound based on MP3. Add the richer video handled by that Voodoo3, and the end result is that you'll never leave your computer. Assuming that the next level of games is bug-free, of course.

SIDELINES

RadioActive software obviously haven't taken too much notice of the recent Blizzard/Microstar lawsuit, because they have announced that they are hard at work on creating an unofficial sequel to Valve Software's Half-Life, entitled Half-Life: Level 5. Details are still sketchy, but it seems that players will be taking on the character of Sara Wilson, an overseer for the storage of hazardous chemicals in the Black Mesa facility at the time when things go horribly wrong for Gordon Freeman (and everyone else). RadioActive say that there will be quite a few new weapons and levels to play, as well as a new deathmatch mode or two, including the intriguingly named 'Frag the scientist'.

3Dfx video cards are coming under increased competition from a host of other 2D/3D and straight 3D manufacturers, but along with the home consumer market 3Dfx are very aware of the lucrative OEM sales aspect of distribution. So, 3Dfx representatives were rather chuffed recently when they announced that Gateway will now be including the Voodoo Banshee video cards in their G and GP series (aimed at home consumers and SOHO's respectively). Predictably enough, 3Dfx CEO Greg Ballard said that "consumers with a Gateway G or GP series PC and Voodoo Banshee will experience the ultimate platform for 3D entertainment with the broadest selection of the most popular and most innovative games".

We hadn't really heard much about them before Myth came upon the scene, BUT Bungie have been around for a while creating top quality Mac games. With the success of Myth and the anticipation surrounding Myth 2, it should come as no surprise to learn that Bungie Software have been named by Inc. magazine as the 101st fastest growing private company in the United States, and that's including every private company in every industry in America. Congrats to all at Bungie, long may their games continue.

We've been noticing a resurgence of the god-sim genre of late, and we're really rather pleased about it too. Chris Sawyer, the man behind Theme Park and Transport Tycoon, has teamed up with Hasbro to create a new 'Tycoon' title. Rollercoaster Tycoon will put you in control of every aspect of running an entertainment park, from designing and building the rollercoasters (and other rides) to designing the layout of the park and keeping your customers happy with snack foods and toilets and so on. Rollercoaster Tycoon is expected for release sometime in mid 1999.

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SIDELINES

Hunting rednecks everywhere will be delighted to note that ASC Games' Unreal-engine TNN Outdoors Pro Hunter will feature real staff from the TNN cable show 'Realtree Outdoors', including such hunting luminaries as Bill Jordan. Big Bill will be featured in FMV segments of the game proffering hunting tips and general advice. As to whether he'll be saying 'They're coming right for us!', well, we'll just have to wait and see.

Budding Game developers take note; the Game Developers Conference are running a contest to seek out new, unsigned talent. Entry is open to anyone, as long as you have not signed a deal with a publishing house, though if your game makes the final cut you are supposed to pay your own way to San Jose (do you know the way?). Entries will be accepted until January the 20th, so you'll have to get cracking if you want to be in the running for the \$US 5000 first prize. More information can be obtained from the GDC website at www.gdcconf.com

Stupid marketing ploy #1763: GIG Software own and maintain the online game site WORDland, which is amazingly enough an online multiplayer word game site. In a bid to attract attention to their site, they recently organised a stunningly silly stunt whereby players logged on from a hot air balloon, a yacht, and from the Space Needle (a tall building in Seattle). Billed as the first ever 'land, sea and air interactive gaming experience' the even was hailed as a success by the promoters. Well, it made it into these hallowed news pages, so maybe it was a success, but we're damned if we're gonna include the URL...

Oops...in issue #31 we reviewed the LogiTech Wingman Force joystick and Ubisoft Race Leader wheel. We suggested that an adaptor was missing for each. Not so! Everything you need is in the box, sorry about that.

3DFX DEFEND THEMSELVES FROM TAKEOVER

3Dfx Interactive have built themselves up over the past few years to be one of the premier chipmakers for the home computer market, but their success has brought subsequent dangers along with it. During October of last year, Creative Technology aggressively began to acquire 3Dfx shares, investing around \$US10 million in the company to take their share in 3Dfx to around 6.5%. It seems that 3Dfx are wary of a takeover attempt by Creative, because soon after they instituted a

'shareholder rights plan' (known colloquially as a 'poison pill') to make it much more difficult for any company to acquire a controlling interest in 3Dfx without the company's consent.

3Dfx representatives were downplaying the move however, with Steve Schick saying that "it's a precautionary move more than anything else....it's just a fiscally and legally responsible thing to do". The signs are strong that Creative would be interested in acquiring a controlling interest in the company however, as in the



past they have acquired Ensonic and E-mu systems (both producers of technology used by Creative). With Creative's recent move into the arena of graphics cards, and their battle with Diamond for market share in that arena, the acquisition of 3Dfx must seem like an attractive idea to Creative management.

RITUAL RELEASE SIN, BEGIN WORK ON PATCHES

The team at Ritual have been working long and hard on their eagerly anticipated First Person Shooter, Sin, but the release of the game to make it in time for the pre-Christmas spending rush resulted in a rather buggy release. Yes, another game that has been rushed out before it was really ready for release so as to financially benefit in the short term - a facet of the game publishing stakes that has become all too common (and more and more annoying to the legions of fans for each game).

Ritual have acknowledged that Sin does require many fixes, and by the tie you read this a patch should be available, hopefully. At the time of going to press, the patch will fix the level loading times (which were abominable), the bug with the first boss, the problems with Sound Blaster compatibility issues, and the bug that sometimes makes the program load the level twice (twice as abominable). Congratulations to Ritual for the game of Sin, which is really very good, but someone, somewhere deserves a serious talking to for the anger and unhappiness that the buggy release has engendered in many fans.



TOP TEN GAMES

Rank	Title	Developer / Distributor
TW	LW	
1	1	NEED FOR SPEED 3 ELECTRONIC ARTS / E.A.
2	2	CAESAR III SIERRA / WOLF
3	5	GRAND PRIX LEGENDS SIERRA / WOLF
4	16	COLIN MCRAE RALLY CODEMASTERS / OZISOFT
5	8	CROC FOX / EA
6	4	MOTOCROSS MADNESS MICROSOFT / VARIOUS
7	2	DUNE 2000 V.I.E / E.A.
8	10	COMMANDOS EIDOS / OZISOFT
9	7	COMBAT FLIGHT SIM MICROSOFT / VARIOUS
10	-	RAINBOW 6 RED STORM / OZISOFT

Week ending 8th November

The ACER best selling charts are carefully compiled from a sample panel of retailers selected across Australia including mass merchants, department stores, specialty software stores and independent outlets. Retailers surveyed include Myer Grace Bros, K Mart, Target, Big W, Harvey Norman Computer Super stores, Hi-Tech World, Video Games Heaven, Games Wizards, Hedlam Computers, and Software Today. ACER assumes no responsibility for any errors or omissions ©1997 Charts supplied by Australian Computer Entertainment Review

ACER

CRACK DOT COM FOLDS

Crack Dot Com was a relatively small development company based in Austin Texas and comprised of some ex-id staff. They had some small success with Abuse, a side scrolling 2D platform game, and had been working on the game they felt would launch

them into the big time - Golgotha (a Battlezone-esque game). Dave Taylor, Crack's co-owner has sadly recently announced that the company had run out of money, and because they hadn't been able to secure a publishing deal with one of the major publishing

houses they would be going out of business. "Golgotha was compared by publishers primarily to BattleZone and Uprising, and those titles sold really poorly" said Taylor, and that was the "killer reason" for the demise.

Golgotha may still be completed however, because Crack

made the decision to release the source code and data - free to the public domain. Already a Linux-based project has begun to complete the game (www.linuxgames.com), with mailing lists for Linux, x86, Windows, MAC OS, and Be OS versions to be completed.

HERCULES TERMINATOR BEAST

Hercules is the first off the mark with an accelerator card that is powered by the Savage3D graphics processor made by S3. The card has only 8MB of SDRAM on-board, which seems a little strange considering most other 3D accelerators have at least 16MB.

Specifications:

2D/3D Controller S3 Savage3D

Bus Type AGP 2x

Memory 8MB SDRAM

RAMDAC 250MHz

3D features

Alpha Blending
Bilinear Filtering, Trilinear Filtering, Anisotropic Filtering
Reflection mapping
Edge Anti-aliasing
Fogging, Shadows
Flat and Gouraud Shading
MIP Mapping
Per pixel Perspective Correction
Bump Mapping

Misc features S3 Texture Compression (S3TC)

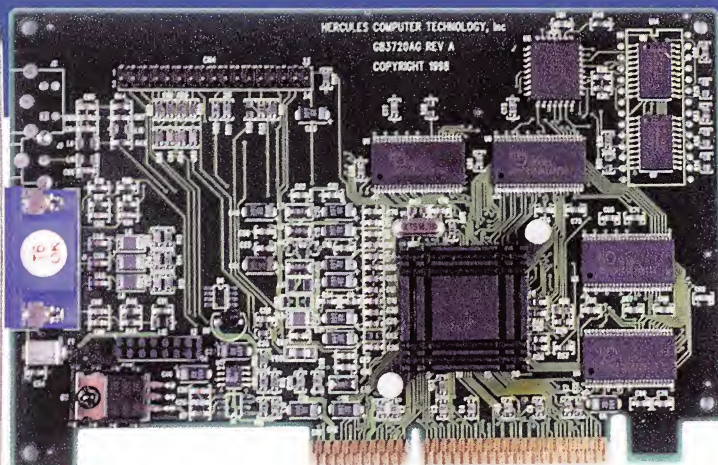
Max Resolution

1600x1200x16 (2D),
1280x1024x24 (2D)
1600x1200x16 (3D),
1280x1024x24 (2D)

Z buffer 16/24bit

Video Playback

MPEG-1 MPEG-2 Hardware Assist
Software DVD ready



It's time to drop your old preconceptions about the quality of S3 cards - they're really beginning to match up now

24MB to be exact. The compressing of textures is a very good idea it can not only increase the available texture memory. But also allows for textures to be transferred over the AGP bus at a theoretical 4x speed.

Back to reality

In reality though it has to be said that the drivers supplied with the Hercules Savage3D need some work. On the most part they don't do too badly, the only problem that I found was with 3DMARK 99. In the game benchmarks it was very noticeable, the textures in the race seen were breaking up in the water areas. In the first person game the textures didn't know what they were supposed to be doing. Although in all real games I tested there was no breakup in the textures at all. I was quite surprised at the quality too, light years ahead of the Virge chipset. Definitely worth a look especially if you need good AGP 2x performance and nice crisp rendering quality on a tight budget.

Garry Wallis

Test PC configuration

- Intel Pentium II 333 (underclocked to 300MHz)
- Abit BH6 Motherboard
- 64MB SDRAM (PC100)
- 4.2GB Quantum Fireball SE (UDMA)
- TeraSound 64 sound card
- 32x Leoptics CD-ROM
- Windows 98 and DirectX 6.0

3DMark 99 - A NEW ERA

Looking over the benchmark results you will see that we have dropped the Turok benchmark and picked up a few others. The most significant of these is 3DMark 99, which not only performs a set of synthetic benchmarks but also tests the system with two game benchmarks. Unlike the old 3D Winbench, optimising code to run faster on 3D Mark 99 will not be cheating, as any optimising done for 3D Mark 99 will also have the added benefit of increasing performance in all other games too. Finally, a real 3D benchmarking utility! Thanks must go out to Nathan of FutureMark corporation for allowing us to use 3DMark 99.

S3TC?

One of the most significant reasons that the Savage3D can still display at such high resolutions is the fact that it has the ability to compress its textures. This compression can allow very large amounts of textures to be stored in just 8MB of RAM,

Hercules Terminator Beast

		OpenGL			DirectX Card	
		Sin	Quake II	Incoming	Forsaken	3DMARK99
Hercules Terminator Beast	(640x480x16)	13.3	29.8	49.00	67.42	
	(800x600x16)	12.6	24.9	36.61	50.87	1560 3dmarks
	(1024x768x16)	10.4	18.1	27.16	34.67	77.8 Mtexels/s
Diamond Stealth II* G460 (8MB)	(640x480x16)	17.3	36.0	38.98	47.69	
	(800x600x16)	14.9	25.2	32.77	35.00	
	(1024x768x16)	11.9	14.8	21.17	23.94	

* Quoted for comparison purposes

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SIROCCO SPEAKER SYSTEM

Videologic: (039) 722 2089 • RRP: \$950 (approx)

Heavy Metal Gaming

Specifications:

- Fully active amplifier system with five amps, one per speaker cone, with signal splitting at the input/preamp stage and each amp optimized for its specific frequency range.

Power Supply: Dual rail toroidal C-core transformer with 28000 microfarads of smoothing capacitance providing straight line power.

Attitude control: Dual shelving filter for mid/high frequency tone adjustment, plus and minus 6dB range. The Attitude control maintains the integrity of the entire frequency response curve and works by moving 1KHz either side of the mid point and moving the entire bass and treble lines in opposite directions, increasing bass while decreasing treble and vice versa.

- Wood construction MDF cabinets with magnetically shielded drivers.

- Exceptional THD figures: Less than 0.01% at 1KHz and nominal output 1% at 80 watt RMS all channels driven.

- All speaker cones by Audax, the leading British manufacturer

all). Lastly, within a minute of listening to ANYTHING through Sirocco you'll be on the phone to your mates, ordering them around to hear the most kick-ass sound system in the gaming universe.

True audiophile Hi Fi

Sirocco is not merely a very good set of multimedia speakers. It is, instead, true audiophile Hi Fi equipment. While the rest of the manufacturers of this sort of gear struggle to compete with one another in the sub-\$500 category, VideoLogic have bravely created a new class of PC Sound Hardware - for want of a better term, let's just call this new category "the best", for NOTHING else can touch Sirocco.

Sirocco even has a story behind it! Kevin Dale, the Sales Manager of the UK multimedia firm, is a hardcore audiophile nut. By some miracle, he managed to convince the Business Directors that conventional thinking ought to be abandoned, and that VideoLogic should go all-out and design a totally over-the-top, no-holds-barred PC Hi Fi system.

Right about now you'd have glanced up at the price and are thinking that for close to a grand, maybe a CPU or monitor upgrade

would be a wiser purchase. Well, that may be, but I defy you to spend 20 minutes having Sirocco demonstrated (in this case, skip the games shop and go get the sales treatment from an audio equipment shop) and not pull out your credit card. I just can't think of a single adjective to adequately describe Sirocco, so make do with "mind-blowing", "bloody amazing" and "simply incredible".

Only play LOUD!

The engine house is the heavy black metal amplifier. Or should I say "amplifiers"... There are 5 of them inside the box! 2 for each of the satellites (ohhh.. It feels so demeaning to call them that, they're "speakers", OK?), plus a third for the subwoofer. Each speaker needs 2 lots of the big and thick cable - one for the tweeter, one for the midrange. There's also an auxiliary channel for a second subwoofer, should you be determined to COMPLETELY destroy your relationship with the neighbourhood. It's doubtful you'll bother, as the Sirocco subwoofer is of the highest quality - only pumping the lowest of frequencies to rattle your insides, break windows and attract the police.

Everything sounds amazing through Sirocco; from blasting action games, tinkly medieval RPG music or dirty thrash rock. In an act of selfless consideration for my co-workers, I took the Sirocco home for the week we had it (had to send them off to Australian Hi Fi World for review yesterday, still dismally depressed about having to say goodbye...), with the volume set on exactly half-way, my usually extremely noisy house was a hell of a lot louder than it had ever been before - up to max volume... well, you could run a nightclub with these babies! The beautiful thing is that Sirocco can handle this extreme volume with almost no distortion!

Sirocco will sound better than your home stereo, will transform your gaming like nothing else can and is a long overdue development in PC sound hardware. Hats off, VideoLogic, you rule!

Ben Mansill

There are 3 phases of amazement that you'll experience if you're lucky enough to be a new owner of VideoLogic's Sirocco First up, you'll crack a big fat grin when you observe that all the components are Sexy Black, instead of Dreary Beige. Next up, during the course of unpacking all the bits you'll almost drop the amplifier because it'll be the heaviest thing you've lifted in quite some time (being a non-physical gamer and



Wood and metal audiophile gaming gear that will rock your world. We guarantee it.

LOGITECH FORMULA FORCE

RRP: \$169 • FORCE FEEDBACK VERSION RRP: \$369

Just look at it. This is one gaming peripheral that absolutely reeks of quality. Let's just cut the fluff and get right to the point, shall we? This is the best PC steering wheel yet made (not including, of course, the wondrous Hyperstimulator, but this is half the price...).

The Formula Force tackles the Big Three problems facing PC steering wheels with style. Problem 1: Keeping the thing on your desk. Formula Force has two huge G-Clamps to keep it still, beautiful. Problem 2: One handed driving. Unlike most wheels, which stupidly insist on putting a conventional gear shifter knob on the base, the Formula Force features gear selector levers behind the wheel, just like real race cars. Problem 3: Additional programmable buttons please. Unless you buy a cheap and crappy converted Playstation wheel (which have a button on every square inch of surface area), you're generally stuck with just two buttons. Formula Force has 4 programmable buttons positioned with ergonomical perfection.

They even got the pedals almost right! Aside from the curved head, which tends to slide around just a bit, the floor unit is very

nicely designed indeed.

It's the wheel itself that gets the glory though. It's padded with soft rubber, and is shaped with a style and useability that you'd be hard pressed to find in any Italian sports car.

Then there's the Force Feedback. Unlike earlier Force Feedback wheels and joysticks, the Logitech uses cables instead of cogs, which makes for a far smoother and precise ride.

If you can't push the budget for the Force Feedback, then go right ahead and pick up its baby brother. Regardless of price, this is the

wheel to have right now. I bought the demo unit they sent, so impressed was I with it. This truly shames everything else out there.

Ben Mansill



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METABYTE WICKED3D VENGEANCE

Specifications:

2D/3D Controller: 3DFX Voodoo Banshee

Bus Type: AGP 1x

Memory: 16MB SDRAM

RAMDAC: 250MHz

3D features:

Alpha Blending

Bilinear Filtering, Trilinear Filtering

Environment Mapping

Fogging

Flat and Gouraud Shading

MIP Mapping

Per pixel Perspective Correction

Specular Highlights

Misc features:

Re2Flex

WickedVision

Max Resolution:

2000 x 1500x32 (2D)

1920 x 1440x16 (3D)

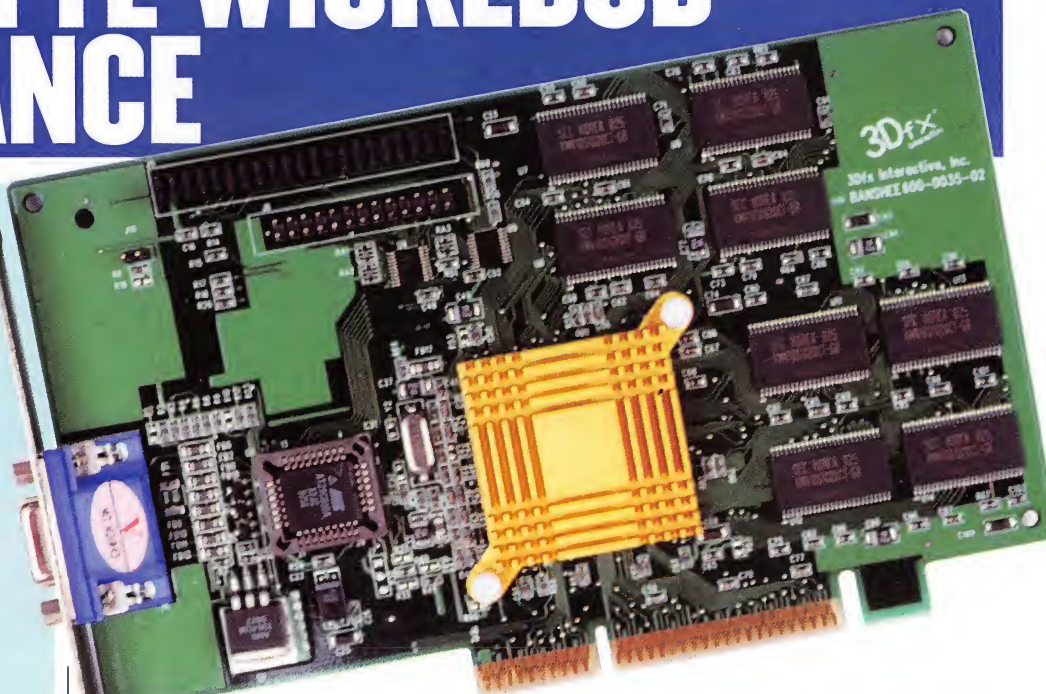
Z buffer: 16bit

Video Playback:

MPEG-1

MPEG-2 Hardware Assist

X and Y scaling and filtering



You might notice that the Wicked3D doesn't report game frame rates to be quite as high as the Phoenix used in comparison - that's because there was no way to turn off syncing to the refresh rate of the monitor

Re2Flex, the way it should be?

Normally a Voodoo Banshee based video card will be restricted to a set of standard screen resolutions. Most common of course are; 640x480, 800x600 and 1024x768 pixels in a 4:3 aspect ratio. Most other cards will only support a specific set of resolutions fullstop, but with Metabyte's drivers you can set the card to variable resolutions (if the game supports it). Check out the table 1 below to see what I mean.

Basically if the game allows it, the resolution can be set to any size you like in single byte increments! There is no other Banshee card on the market with drivers that can go as high as 1920x1440 in 3D. And there isn't a

general consumer card that can go as high as 2000x1500 in 2D. Not that you would be able to find many monitors that would support resolutions like this, but hey, at least they are there.

Performance

The Vengeance is certainly no slouch in the performance department, though it does seem to be slower than the Maxi Gamer Phoenix card. This maybe due to the Metabyte card syncing to the refresh rate of my monitor - and I couldn't find any way to disable this. Still, a great card from one of best video card manufacturers around.

Gary Wallis

table 1

Re2flex 2D Resolution and Refresh Rate support

Colour Depth	Resolution Range	Refresh Rate Range
8bpp	320x200 to 2000x1500	60Hz to 160Hz
16bpp	320x200 to 2000x1500	60Hz to 160Hz
24bpp	320x200 to 2000x1500	60Hz to 160Hz
32bpp	320x200 to 2000x1500	60Hz to 160Hz

Re2Flex 3D Resolution and Refresh Rate Support

16bpp	320x200 to 1920x1440	60Hz to 160Hz
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Test PC configuration

- Intel Pentium II 333 (underclocked to 300MHz)
- Abit BH6 Motherboard
- 64MB SDRAM (PC100)
- 4.2GB Quantum Fireball SE (UDMA)
- TeraSound 64 sound card
- 32x Leoptics CD-ROM
- Windows 98 and DirectX 6.0

METABYTE WICKED3D VENGEANCE

		OpenGL			DirectX			Fill Rate
		Sin	Quake II	Incoming	Forsaken	Unreal	3DMARK99	
Wicked3D Vengeance	(640x480x16)	29.9	38.3	55.82	69.97	33.06	2242 3dmarks	84.2 Mtexels/s
	(800x600x16)	25.0	30.7	38.99	66.44	25.93	1831 3dmarks	39.3 Mtexels/s
	(1024x768x16)	17.1	20.6	N/R	37.79	17.53	1380 3dmarks	35.3 Mtexels/s
Maxi Gamer Phoenix* (Voodoo Banshee)	(640x480x16)	33.8	57.9	59.97	178.96			
	(800x600x16)	31.6	44.9	60.40	97.84			
	(1024x768x16)	22.6	29.5	45.86	78.92			

* Quoted for comparison purposes

GATEWAY 2000 G6-450XL

Specifications:

- Full Tower Case
 - 19" VX900 Monitor (18" viewable)
 - Intel 450MHz Pentium II processor (512k cache)
 - 128MB PC-100 SDRAM
 - 8MB AGP nVidia Riva 128ZX Graphics card
 - 12MB Voodoo2
 - 14.4GB IBM Ultra ATA HDD
 - DVD-ROM (2x)
 - Phillips CD-Recordable (2x/6x)
 - SoundBlaster PCI 64V Sound Card
 - Boston Acoustic Multimedia Speakers
 - Telepath 56k V.90 Internal fax/data modem
 - Telstra Big Pond Internet Kit with 50 hours free access
 - Windows 98
 - MS Office 97, Small Business edition
 - Microsoft Intellimouse
 - 104 key Keyboard
 - Lifetime technical support
 - 3 year desktop warranty
- RRP: \$6599 (including tax)**

There's been a growing trend for the large resellers and manufacturers to produce high-end gamer's machines, and this is about the best of them so far. The 450MHz processor is perfect, there's been no skimping on the RAM with a full 128MB

(single DIMM) complement, and if you feel like it, there's still two banks free for up to 384MB in total. The speakers aren't of home cinema quality, but they're a long, long way from the crappy pieces of trash that used to be the norm with systems like this, and the Sound Blaster 64 is perfectly serviceable. Truth be told, however, we would have preferred an Aureal Vortex based card or an SB Live! for 3D sound, though this is not a critical flaw in the machine's design.

But yes, that is a rather hefty price tag. Take a look at the components and there can be no arguments - this is a fantastic gamer's machine. We love ya Gateway! All the components are top of the line quality stuff, and there's nary a component we would want to change if we were given the choice (apart from perhaps a dual Voodoo2 configuration. Because Gateway have a clue about what their customers want, if you do want to chop and change and add a component or two, it's as easy as pie (though you will have to pay a bit extra). You gotta love that.

And just because this is a system designed for high end power users, don't think that it's going to be confusing to set up and get started with. As with all Gateway



machines, there are copious manuals included as well as a nice and simple poster explaining what colour coded cables to plug in where. Gateway have even included a general manual to explain the basic ins and outs of applications like Word, setting up email and web access, and using the fax capabilities of the machine - top stuff.

Simply put, right from the nice, chunky, and very fetching full tower case through to the components, the layout of the innards, and the way that Gateway have obviously sat down and thought about what people like us want from a machine, you've got the best. Definitely a very nice pressie to find under the tree this Christmas.



THE ULTIMATE IN WICKED 3D GAMING



ENTERTAINMENT TECHNOLOGY



Wicked3D Vengeance

The Wicked3D Vengeance includes 3Dfx's Voodoo Banshee chipset that provides unmatched 2D and stunning 3D acceleration. It offers 128 bit 2D acceleration for incredible speed in 2D games and applications. The Wicked3D Vengeance provides superb 3D acceleration and complete compatibility with all your favourite Direct3D, QuakeGL, and 3Dfx Glide games. 16Mb of 100MHz 25ns SDRAM. Higher resolutions than any other Voodoo Banshee. Exclusive stereoscopic eyewear support.

Wicked3D Voodoo2

Fully loaded with 12MB of high speed EDO DRAM the Wicked3D will give up to 40% better performance on Direct3D games than other Voodoo2 based graphics cards. The Re2Flex technology shatters the 800x600 (1024x768 SLI) barrier by providing resolutions up to 1024x672 or 1024x1024 in SLI. Support for 160 games with H3D Eyewear in stereoscopic 3D.

Wicked3D Vision

Take your game experience to new heights with the 3D Wicked Vision H3D wireless LCD Eyewear system! When coupled with the Wicked3D Voodoo2 or Vengeance, over 160 of the latest games are supported including Quake 2, Jedi Knight, Unreal, Need For Speed 3 and more.

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ULTIMA ONLINE

Ralph Koster, UO's Lead Designer, talks with March about the past, present and future of the worlds first 'megaplayer' game

On the eve of the release of Ultima Online: The Second Age, and the first anniversary of Ultima Online, we dropped Ralph Koster (lead designer of Ultima Online) a line and had a chat about all things UO. Here's what he had to say:

PCPP: First off, to the total newbie game player, how would you describe Ultima Online? Do you think that this description has changed at all during UO's history (i.e. - in the last year)?

RK: I would term UO a virtual world. This means that it has game aspects, social aspects, and community aspects - more ways to "play" than just the basic game system or rules suggest. It means there's no single way to win, and no "right" way to play. I happen to feel that an online world offers the most scope for playing a role, and that stand-alone games generally don't offer much scope for it at all! At its core, UO is about possibility - the many alternatives the player has in interacting with both the UO environment and with other players.

PCPP: Describe the debut year of Ultima Online. Good? Bad? Ugly?

RK: Pretty good, overall. We've had a great deal of success, a lot of it unexpected. We've won a bunch of awards. We've gained an extremely vocal and devoted playerbase, and we've maintained good contact with them. There's been controversy and the like of course, but a lot of that is to be expected with something as ambitious and new as UO.

PCPP: It seems that the UO team and OSI in general have copped a fair bit of criticism from the general game playing public. Do you think this was balanced (constructive criticism as opposed to destructive behaviour)? How has this affected the course of Ultima Online?

RK: I think a lot of folks didn't really



understand what UO was about. Many came to it expecting different sorts of behaviour from their fellow players, for example. Many seemed to expect a much more linear experience than any online world is going to offer. But at the same time, we've gotten lots of really great feedback that we've been able to incorporate into UO over time. So in the end, I think that UO has actually evolved quite a lot as a direct result of constructive criticism from players.

PCPP: Despite the vocal dissatisfied minority, UO seems to be thriving. During the developmental stage, did you ever underestimate just

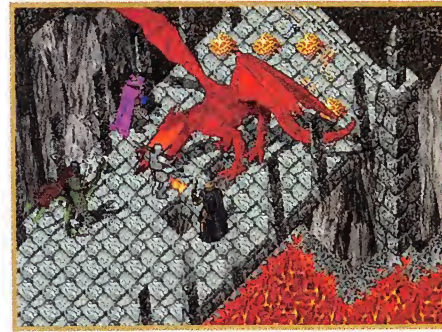
how much the success of UO as a experience would depend on the users that played it? If yes, how have you dealt with this?

RK: We knew that the player base would dictate how the game felt to play, of course - that's common to all online games. And we knew that the game, by its nature, would attract a specific type of gamer, too. UO's philosophy of freedom of action and gameplay, though, has always meant a broad audience, since there are many different ways to find enjoyment in the game. The real question when UO was first being developed wasn't what type of players it would get, but how big an audience it would find. Remember, at the time there weren't very many online RPGs out there at all, and they had a very low profile in terms of public awareness.

PCPP: One of the disappointments most made vocal by the UO community is the apparent lack of the "massive story-line" that was supposed to unfold soon after the public release of UO. What happened with that?

RK: Well, we do have an ongoing story-line, with subplots and the like - the latest being the story of the Followers of Armageddon. But for compelling narratives to work, players really need to feel like they participated in them themselves. Which is awfully hard to pull off in a game of this scale. We're looking at various ways of providing more feeling of "story" to the game, though. We're also looking at more ways of making the Virtues and Ultima history more visible in actual gameplay.

PCPP: Some argue that to survive in UO, especially if you're not part of a guild, players must diversify their skills as much as possible. This seems in contrast to the original game plan of UO being a world where players worked as a tight community, relying on each other's skills. Just how much of this is consid-





ered an important issue by the development team? Are there any plans to change this?

RK: This is definitely an issue. It's a somewhat tricky design issue, actually, because even in the real world, the generalist who is at least competent in everything does do better than the narrow specialist. And this carries over into UO. Our catchphrase is - there is a "Jack of All Trades, Master of None." We continue to look for ways to reward specialisation in specific skills and trades, while keeping the Jack Of All Trades viable. Examples of this include our recent changes to weapons to create more diversity, and the planned expansion to magery to create a pure mage profession.

PCPP: Why should I, the typical UO subscriber, pick up the Second Age from the shelf - especially if the original UO is still being enhanced and upgraded?

RK: Well, of course, if you're a typical UO subscriber, you probably shouldn't buy it off the shelf! Instead, you can order an upgrade direct from us for a special, very low price from the Second Age web site. As far as why you should get it - well, there's the new lands, of course. They look great, they're very different from the old lands, and they've got a lot of new space to explore. And of course, new monsters, which offer challenges not found in the original UO, such as area effect damage (cold damage when you get too close to a white wym, for example). There's a war going on between two of the non-human races found in the lost lands, too. There's also interface changes, such as a brand new pop-up help system, support for multiple languages, and of course the big window, which we recently released to all UO players as part of our celebration of UO's first year. And two of the killer features, I think, are the chat system - essentially like IRC, but embedded in the UO client, and the automatic translator, which can translate



(Top) The new 'big' window interface. Yet another indication that UO is finally getting out of Beta stage.

the speech of other players from various foreign languages. The UO subscriber who is upgrading will probably also want the hefty paper manual and the map of the lost lands that is included.

PCPP: From a Dungeon Master's point of view, and from the point of view of caretakers of a finely balanced game world, what do you think the Second Age has to offer the existing UO experience?

RK: New challenges are always important for players. The main continent of Britannia has grown increasingly "civilised" as player cities have grown up in the clearings. So we explicitly designed the lost lands as a frontier - highly dangerous, with lots of wilderness. It's also designed for colonisation and house building, eventually, but laid out in such a way that "urban sprawl" won't happen.

Instead, there are many cul-de-sacs and cool places to build guild strongholds.

PCPP: How about Ever Quest and the many other online RPGs sprouting up around the place? Is the market yet strong enough to support these titles or is there a danger of competition suffocating the genre?

RK: It's a new genre, and we look forward to seeing what they do and how they do it. There's a lot of room for experimentation and new approaches in this type of game. I also think that because of that, all the online RPGs out there are very distinctive from one another, and are doing some things very differently.

PCPP: The Australian UO server. Will we ever get it?

RK: We'll have to see how many Australian players buy The Second Age! :)



ULTIMA: Ascension

Despite controversial design decisions, Ascension will be the best Ultima yet. Probably. We hope.

Category RPG
Players 1
Publisher EA/Origin
Available 1st Quarter '99

Richard Garriott has consistently remarked that the Ultima series has never been just a role-playing game. Ever since Ultima IV, an Ultima game has never been a statistics-based RPG and nor has it been about role-playing the character of your choice. Rather, they have all been about character interaction and the story first and foremost. They have all seen you taking on the role of the Avatar and been about you confronting the problems the Avatar faces. The Ultima series has been a twenty year attempt at creating a "living, breathing, virtual world". Ultima: Ascension, Garriott hopes, should be seen as yet another step along that journey.

Multiple views

Let's have a closer look at some of the (occasionally controversial, it must be said) gameplay elements we can expect in U:A. The 3D engine has always looked good, but the recent news that Origin have managed to double its speed since E3 is highly promising - I might even be able to afford a PC that can run it! Although primarily played in the 3rd-person, there is also a 1st-person view and the rather cool option to zoom out to any distance (so you could conceivably position the camera to play like the top-down Ultimas of old). The land of Britannia will be smaller than it was in Ultima VII, but still remains a much larger world than Pagan. And like U7, the cities and wilderness areas will conjoin seamlessly - there are no levels or breaks to the consistency of the world.

Sophisticated interaction

Everyone loved the interactivity present in the minutiae of daily life in U7 - baking bread,



forging weapons, making cloth, etc - and this will return in Ascension, you will be pleased to hear. Citizens again go about their routine activities, heading off to work in the morning, visiting the pub in the evening before tucking up in bed at night. Overall, the interactive aspects of the game have been upped considerably on previous Ultimas. Conversations in U7 often felt artificial. Someone would tell you their daughter was missing and in great danger (or whatever), yet they would continue ploughing their farm after you said goodbye. The difference in Ascension is that events will happen before your eyes. I like the example given of you witnessing someone bursting out of a shop and sprinting off down the road, with the shopkeeper appearing at the door and pleading for you to chase after the thief!

Predetermined scripts

Full speech for all characters is an excellent idea - so long as



It's set to be the best looking Ultima yet, but will it be the most engaging?



the Avatar doesn't have some horrible poncey voice. I believe fears that full speech may dilute the dialogue are unfounded, since Ultima games have always relied upon predetermined scripts - and any doubters should first name a game that hasn't. The number of characters living in Britannia is anticipated to be

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REQUIRES 3D ACCELERATION



thus avoiding the distraction that afflicts so many other games of pausing to save every few minutes just in case you get killed. In a funny

kind of way, I think that being able to save anywhere, especially when you simply have to in order to survive, actually lessens the feeling of mortality so essential to any RPG (or any game, for that matter). I can understand that having to save relieves the frustration of repeating sections of the game, but for me this is outweighed by the benefits of resurrection.

No parties!

Probably the most controversial feature is the lack of a party. Yet, the more I contemplate this, the more I get excited about the possibilities it presents. As you may know, U:A will not feature a traditional party of characters. You will play the Avatar alone, though you will be joined at various stages by the companions from previous Ultima games. What I hope this means is that you won't feel so much like the whole world revolves entirely around your character. Iolo may link up with you for a certain quest, or you might rendezvous with Senti and Shamino at The Blue Boar Inn, but they'll all have their own lives to lead and their own roles to play in the broader story. Surely, it is better for Iolo to be a "real" person than just another pair of hands in combat? If this all means Origin can flesh out the game world in the manner I think they can, then this particular design decision may well turn out to be the most significant.

Ultima: Ascension is tentatively due for release in March next year. However, I would expect it to appear closer to winter. Shaping up as it is, like a sublime combination of the best of Ultima VII and Ultima Underworld, Ascension should be more than worth the wait.

David Wildgoose



similar to that in U7 with, of course, all of them capable of providing enlightening or at least entertaining conversation. A greater emphasis on training is expected, as many Britannians will be willing to assist the Avatar in improving his skills and abilities.

Death is final

One aspect that has me disheartened at this stage is hearing that Lord British won't be resurrecting the Avatar when you die. If the unfortunate occurs, then you'll be asked to either restore or restart. This is a great shame. One of Ultima's often overlooked strengths was that you never really had to worry about saving the game,

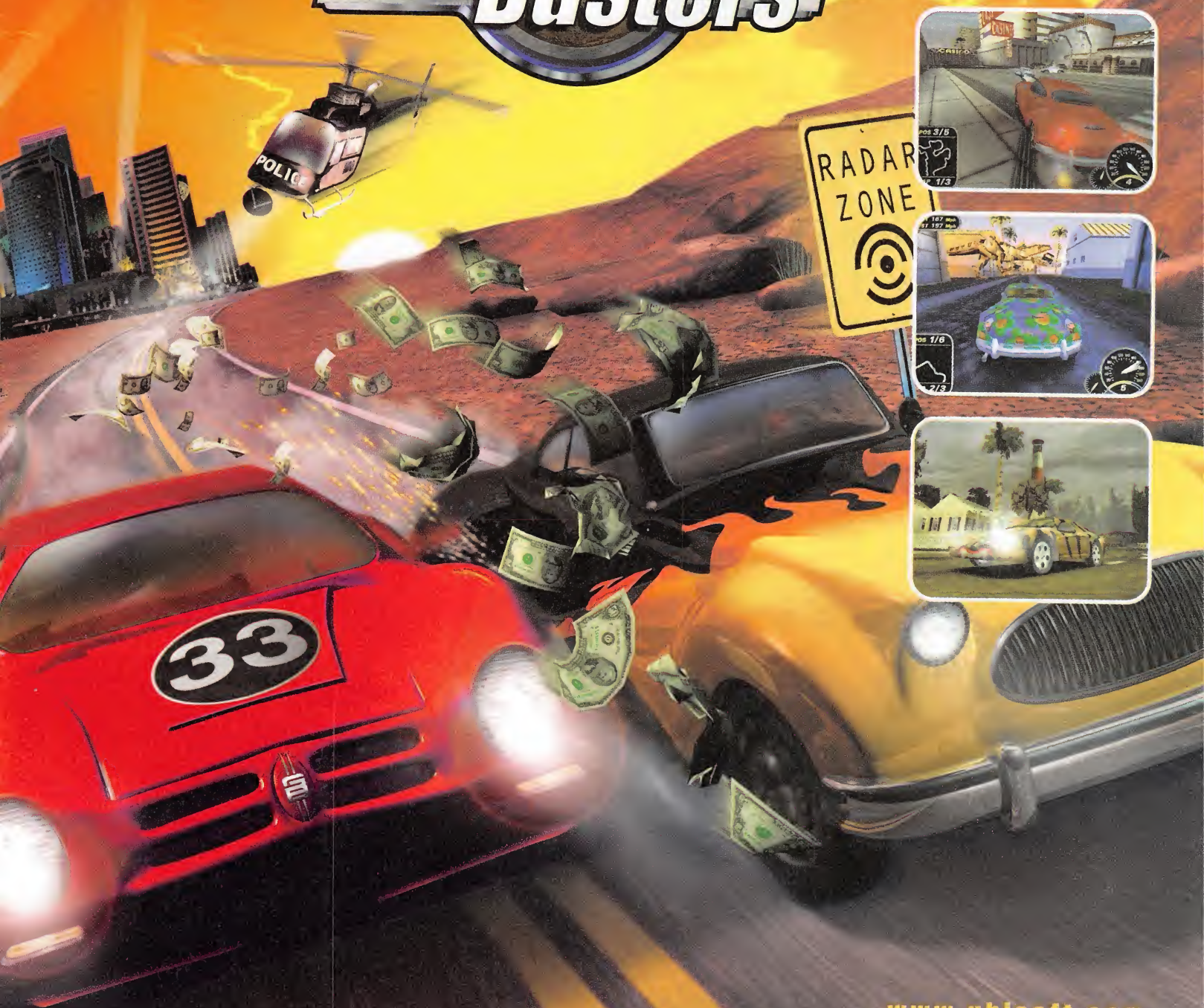
The default camera angle, we have to say, seems to owe a large debt to the Lara phenomenon...



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GAME GROOVES

A short history of music in games, by Rod Spoonman Campbell

For the last ten years or so, multiplayer capabilities have been the most neglected part of game design — generally being tacked on in the last few weeks of development for a bit of one on one modem play. Even more neglected though, was the gaming soundtrack, generally written in the last five minutes while the developer was waiting for the guy in charge of multiplayer to finish.

Back in the good old days, people wrote soundtracks for games because they figured it would give the player something to think about in the boring parts of the game, and thus strategy games were some of the first to “feature” music. What they didn’t understand is; good audio is almost as important as good graphics, and a good soundtrack can definitely add a lot more to games than just novelty value. The atmosphere created by a good soundtrack can simply not be recreated any

other way, and when put together in harmony with graphics to die for, they create an awesome gaming experience.

The day of the PC Speaker

All hail the mighty internal PC speaker, for this is where everything began. Now though, the good old PC speaker’s only purpose is to tell you what’s wrong with your beast as you boot up. Once upon a time though, it was the backbone of gaming audio. For its time, the PC speaker could produce reasonable sound effects — you could even get rudimentary speech. One example of such is Mike Ditka’s Football, which had a nice 3D engine and cranked along on a 386. Music however, proved to





Interstate '76; simply the funkiest soundtrack ever, and Wipeout 2097; the soundtrack put technoheads in 7th heaven

be a little more difficult. Turning on the music option in games usually required tying yourself and your chair to the ground for fear of being blown across the room from the high pitched squeals. Either the music remained off, or you were a complete masochist.

The main problem with the PC speakers was that it wasn't designed with games in mind, but for a long time, that was all they had to work with. This is probably one reason why the development of music in games has lagged behind everything else, PC speaker sound effects were good enough to get by, so no one cared about the music.

Around the beginning of this decade, a little add on card became available. Called the "Sound Blaster", it offered what many had always dreamed about: decent sound. Before this, we were playing games like Wolfenstein 3D and the game was pretty much bleeping at you every time you did something. Press the shoot button: "Bleep" someone dies: "Bleep". It was hardly suitable, our games deserved more than that and Creative and a few other manufacturers delivered the Godsend that is MIDI.

The MIDI Age

While MIDI might seem like old hat now, it was a massive step up from being "Bleeped" at. For once you could actually recognise instruments, and their volume was actually at a reasonable level - it even sounded nice. Sound cards didn't become an integral part of the PC until about 1993 though, so even though developers had better tools to work with, they still devoted little or no time to their game's soundtrack.

To an extent, they were probably right to do a soundtrack on the cheap, or leave one out all together; not all that many people listened to it in the first place and music doesn't usually get all that atmospheric when it's in MIDI format. There were fantastic excep-

tions though, take TIE Fighter for instance, and of course Doom. If you've ever listened to the Doom soundtrack you'll understand that it was never a last minute job. Probably the

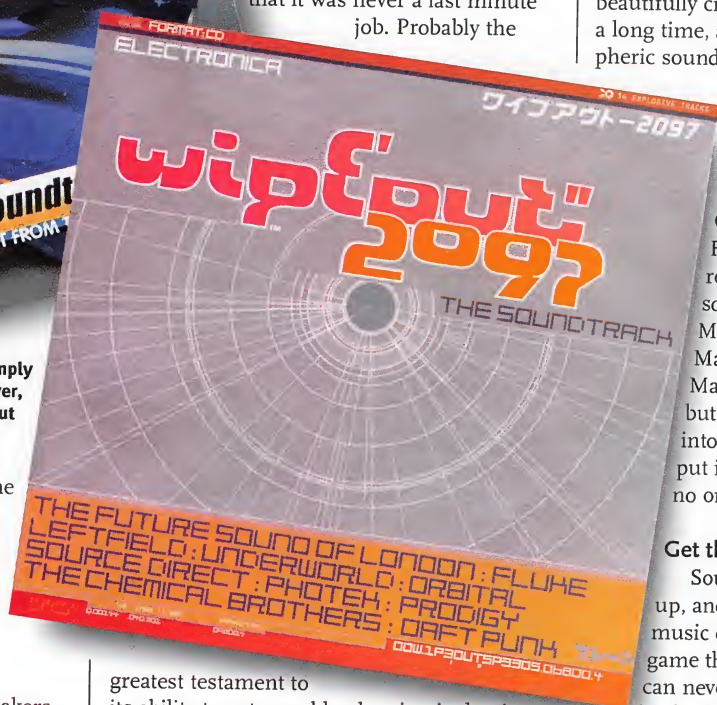
quite a few high profile artists taking a dabble in the soundtrack game, with quite a bit of success. Of course, Quake had its Trent Reznor soundtrack, love it or hate it. It was beautifully crafted and would have taken him a long time, and is probably the most atmospheric soundscape to date. Wipeout had a

group of such high profile Techno artists on its soundtrack that they actually released a music CD of the songs, and they did the same for 2097.

Certain bands such as Fear Factory are taking time off from recording new albums to write songs for games like Shiny's Messiah, and then there is Sonic Mayhem's Quake 2 soundtrack. Many hated it for the style of game, but you'd have to admit, if you were into that style of music you could put it in your music collection and no one would know the difference.

Get the beat

Soundtracks have finally caught up, and developers are realising that music can produce atmosphere in a game that great graphics and gameplay can never hope to achieve. Whether it be deep and dark or a fun carnival, music can portray these images much easier than anything else, and thus a good soundtrack makes a better game, which makes us happy, it makes the developers happy, and it makes you happy. Long live the soundtrack.



greatest testament to its ability to get your blood racing is that it was always playing, but you hardly ever noticed it was there. It seemed weird with it off, and that's saying something.

CD ROM

If the first great revolution in PC gaming was the sound card, the second was the CD ROM drive. Games which came on seven or eight disks now had space to burn on a CD. What to do with that extra space? Someone finally decided that good music in games might not be a bad idea.

One of the very first CD only games; the 7th Guest, featured CD music and boy did it sound great. Considering how much better CD audio is, you'd think that MIDI soundtracks would have died a quick death. Surprisingly enough, a few games still have MIDI fall-back soundtracks if the CD is out of the drive.

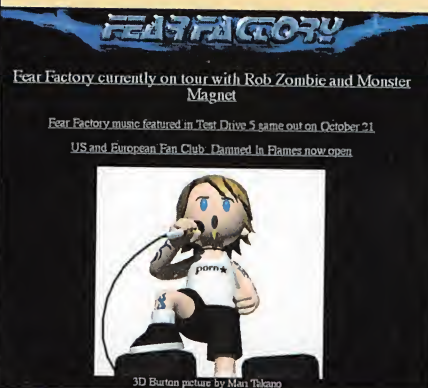
The first game to feature a soundtrack where, if you didn't like the original you could bung your own on, was Hexen. A lot of people did do that, which was a pity, because the Hexen soundtrack is still one of the best to date in my mind. Just about every game these days has this feature, which nullifies the need for a good soundtrack to a certain extent. If you want music you like, put your own CD in, simple. The problem with this is; the developer should put the work in to make their games a whole experience, assaulting as many senses as possible, rather than leaving you to fill in the gaps.

The Celebrity Age

Soundtracks are getting better, that's for sure. Over the last two years, there have been

FEAR FACTORY: the games music specialists.

Fear Factory is a reasonably hard core metal band and have taken to game soundtracks like a duck to water. They have thus far been in Carmageddon (with the infamous Karaoke tracks) they have written music especially for Messiah, and are sure to be featured in Carmageddon 2, Test Drive 5 and a host of other games. The have even included the "Fear Saver" computer game on their latest album "Obsolete" in some territories. If your copy doesn't contain the game, you can download it for free for PC or Mac at www.fearfactory.com



*Let's have a moment of silence for those
we've left behind.*

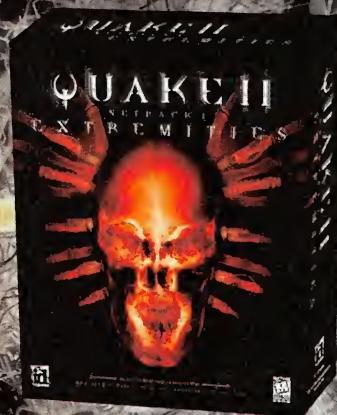




C.H.A.O.S. DEATHMATCH



QWAR2



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GAME ★ OF THE ★ YEAR



As we fully expected, PC PowerPlay readers have shown once again that they are still society's barometer for taste, style and judgement. With only a couple of small exceptions, where our personal tastes were not reflected via yours, we agree completely with the results.

Blizzard blitz!

They've done it again... Last year's GOTY was Blizzard's Diablo, this year they grab the gong again with Starcraft. Beautiful work. Starcraft is gameplay personified. The graphics are average (although somehow Starcraft managed to pick up 2nd place for graphics...), the premise 100% unoriginal and most of the gameplay we've seen before through other games. But as they do, Blizzard nailed that elusive gameplay. With character and charm, Starcraft deceptively reels you in with seemingly simple gameplay, but just as a great game should, rewards dedicated players with subtleties and nuances that keep the game a rewarding experience for many months. Salutations to Starcraft, a truly deserving Game Of The Year!

OVERALL GAME OF THE YEAR



STARCRAFT - 700

Unreal - 617

Quake 2 - 385

Total Annihilation - 240

Very close indeed! The big gap between Unreal and Quake 2 was a bit of a surprise, but with the RTS Total Annihilation a relatively distant 4th we can see it's the quality of the game which you cared about, not necessarily your favourite game style. Bravo!

WORST GAME

HOWZAT - 297

Xenocracy - 178

3D Ultra Pinball - 161

Beast Wars - 122

For the folks that actually bought Howzat, we trust that casting your vote was the gratification you were seeking.



BEST INTRO

STARCRAFT - 437

Uprising - 227

Quake 2 - 203

Mech Commander - 201

OK, so I-War didn't even get a look in.... Still, the Intro is making a big return after a couple of years of being largely ignored. Everyone loves movies, don't they know that?



BEST MUSIC

QUAKE 2 - 449

Starcraft - 313

Unreal - 272

Jedi Knight - 249

Couldn't agree more. Trent Reznor's moody and evocative soundtrack is spellbinding in its own right, yet also fits the Quake 2 gameworld perfectly.



SOUND FX

UNREAL - 660

Starcraft - 462

Quake 2 - 333

Jedi Knight - 233

Whether heard through 2 cheap speakers or a Surround Sound SB Live! setup, Unreal's sound is simply phenomenal as mindblowing quality audio, a tool for intuitive situational awareness and its scary-value.



BEST GRAPHICS

UNREAL - 1580

Starcraft - 203

Quake 2 - 188

Final Fantasy VII - 142

Boom! A big win here for Unreal! Really though, was there ever any doubt that Unreal would pick up this category?



FIRST PERSON ACTION**UNREAL - 1317**

Quake 2 - 1056

Jedi Knight - 477

Mysteries of the Sith - 145

Despite a few lingering bugs, and up against Quake 2's tremendous following, Unreal still managed a clean win here. This was a category we were watching closely, but Unreal had it won from the first few votes received.

**ACTION****GRAND THEFT AUTO - 674**

Die By The Sword - 425

Hellfire: Diablo - 302

Spec Ops - 296

OK, so we didn't like it much... We have been told!

**RTS (REAL TIME STRATEGY)****STARCRAFT - 1349**

Total Annihilation - 640

Commandos - 315

Dune 2000 - 205

Golly... We all thought this one would be much closer! There was never any doubt that it was TA vs. SC, but the sheer magnitude of Starcraft's win blew us away. Something to do with minimum PC requirements, perhaps?

**TBS (TURN BASED STRATEGY)****CIV 2 MULTIPLAY + CLASSIC - 492**

Star Wars: Rebellion - 397

Warlords 3: Darklords - 361

X-Com Interceptor - 339

Good readers! Very good readers! We're all proud of you!

**RPG (ROLE PLAYING GAME)****FINAL FANTASY VII - 2053**

Fallout - 505

Ancient Evil - 267

Legacy of Kain - 264

HUGE win for FFXVII! This epic Japanese RPG that found its way to the PC via the Playstation has clearly stomped all over the opposition. Deservedly so, too.

**DRIVING/RACING****NEED FOR SPEED 3 - 956**

TOCA Touring Car Champs. - 701

Interstate 76: Arsenal - 245

Need For Speed 2: SE - 204

OK, we can handle this. EA sold a hell of a lot of copies of NFS3 and obviously many of you still liked it even after ripping off the shrinkwrap and actually playing it. TOCA TOCA TOCA! There, that's the personal taste bit out of the way.

**FLIGHT SIM****JANE'S F-15 - 394**

Jane's Longbow2 - 392

Flight Unlimited 2 - 376

Red Baron 2 - 339

Scarily close category this. We concur with your votes and look forward to next year's Flight Sim GOTY - it'll be a good one with so many awesome new sims coming.

**ACTION ADVENTURE****TOMB RAIDER 2 - 1698**

Oddworld - 835

Heart of Darkness - 253

Alien Earth - 143

sigh OK, so a cute chick with an impressively athletic body, but average game, kicks the little ugly guy with a great game. We understand...

**FANTASY FLIGHT SIM****DESCENT: FREESPACE - 1110**

X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter - 741

G-Police - 580

Wing Commander: Prophecy - 509

Interplay took on the best of Origin and LucasArts and blew them away at their own game. The Freespace mission pack Silent Threat is just out, let's hope it goes for many sequels.

**ADVENTURE****CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND - 900**

Blade Runner - 733

X-Files - 368

Fallout - 265

LucasArts strike back with a narrow, but significant win over Blade Runner. With all its technical trickery and fancy effects, Blade Runner still couldn't hold it against the little cartoon guy and that magic LucasArts adventure style.

**PUZZLE****WORMS 2 - 2293**

Galapagos - 370

Monopoly: World Cup Edition - 283

Overboard - 237

A crushing victory! This tells us that it may just be time for a new Lemmings game...

**SPORTS****FIFA 98 - 706**

World Cup 98 - 564

AFL 98 - 409

NBA Live 98 - 305

World Cup fever? EA's traditional gold-plated quality? What exactly put FIFA 98 on top remains a mystery, but we choose to believe it's the gameplay, which FIFA 98 has in abundance.

**MULTIPLAYER****QUAKE 2 - 1078**

Starcraft - 730

Total Annihilation - 225

Unreal - 204

Even the crushing dominance of Starcraft couldn't steal this category away from the widely acknowledged king of multiplayer gaming. Unreal's buggy multiplayer code has put it firmly in its place, though its LAN friendliness kept it in the race.

**ONLINE****QUAKE 2 - 1063**

Starcraft - 765

Total Annihilation - 203

Jedi Knight - 164

Unreal, you're outta here! LAN maybe, but online? Forget it! Apart from Unreal's absence, this result is something we are very comfortable with.



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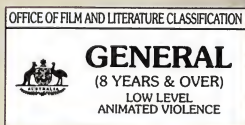
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DARK REIGN 2

SNEAK PREVIEW AND INTERVIEW

March Stepnik catches up with Pandemic Studio's head honcho, Greg Borrud, to see what they're up to with their 'next generation' RTS

Category RTS
Players 1-TBA
Publisher Pandemic
Available 2nd Quarter '99

Just over 15 months ago Dark Reign was released to the gaming public, and it managed to take the Real Time Strategy genre by storm. A lot has happened since then. The RTS market has been saturated with many (some argue, too many) titles, the most notables being Total Annihilation and Starcraft. The genre has splintered (take a look at games like Battlezone and Urban Assault for example), taking on less of the strategy roots that made the genre popular in the first place. The newly formed Pandemic Studios (trademark pending) are behind Dark Reign 2, which has been scheduled for release in the second half of this year (fingers crossed). And Pandemic Studios head honcho, Greg Borrud, has made one thing very clear - Dark Reign 2 is sticking very firmly to its RTS roots. That's not to say that Dark Reign 2 is likely to be overlooked in an already crowded genre of below-par RTS games. For Dark Reign 2 is looking very promising indeed. Not just an RTS with a few more whistles and bells, Dark Reign 2 promises to be a substantial evolution of the genre.

RTS? I'm over it

"There's been a deserved disdain for the RTS genre in general" agrees Borrud. "At last year's E3, it was like 'Oh, it's another RTS game'. There are a lot of the same kind of games coming out, and it doesn't look like slowing up in the not so distant future. Rather than



bringing in new features to enhance the way the RTS is played, many developers have started to really disfigure the genre, and turn into something else".

"While there's a place for 1st person RTS games - and I mean, hey! these games look really great - the focus there is less on the traditional strategy elements and more on action," says Borrud. "If you want to play a first person shooter, go buy a first person shooter. The reason we're pushing forward with Dark Reign 2 is that we're about making traditional RTS games, and there's still so much that can be done with the genre. We feel it's important not to change the basics of the genre too much. The core of

the RTS is to build up your army, your base, collect your resources and go out and kill each other. We want to stay true to that. So rather than creating a new genre or new kind of game, we're really trying to push the genre further than ever before".

New engine

Pandemic Studios, though, are reluctant to reveal too much of what they have planned for Dark Reign, especially at this early stage of development. While DR2 is still rapidly evolving, Pandemic have set some impressive design goals that, if pulled off, will please many RTS enthusiasts.

"We've approached DR2 the same way we approached DR,"

says Borrud. "We wanted to create a really robust engine that was really tailored to the kind of game we're trying to make, which is a 3D strategy game. So we've started from scratch again, building a whole new engine which is giving us the ability to do tonnes and tonnes of new stuff. What we're already doing with the current engine absolutely changes the way you play the game. And we really want to play up the whole 3D aspect. We're creating one of the first RTS games that will be hardware accelerated only. That opens up a whole new world to us".

3D immersion

Pandemic believe that while 3D is the future of gaming, and



(Left) Pandemic staff getting wet'n'wild - what a wacky crazy bunch of guys!



is no stranger to gamers, its application thus far has been limited.

"Everyone within in the industry tends to agree that the most natural step for RTS games, and even games in general at the moment, is to move into a 3D world," says Borrud. "We've already seen a couple of 3D RTS games, like TA and Myst, however we don't think these games really exploited an entirely 3D environment. We're talking about things like 3D terrain, 3D units, and cameras that you can move all over the place. We're trying to

take the genre further than that. We're trying to create an environment that is alive and rich, and an environment where you get a true sense of the world's physics. Tanks will now jump over hills, rather than just rolling over them. You'll be able to really get a concept of true line of sight. You'll be able to really see and feel the hills. You'll get a whole new perspective on the entire battlefield."

Auran?

And how has development of the sequel been faring? Dark Reign had half of the game devel-

oped in Australia and the other half in the United States. The development team behind DR2 have things easier this time around. Just don't look for the name Auran on the box.

"Making Dark Reign was really tough," admits Borrud. "We had twenty people working in Australia on

the engine, and twenty people in LA working on the game. Things were really difficult at times. Communication restrictions meant that we got misunderstood a lot, which resulted in fighting. We were really happy with how Dark Reign turned out, but it was a hard journey. This time around, since we've got the development team in one place we've got things much easier. We've also got lot of the members of the team that worked on Dark Reign (some of the guys from Auran), so essentially we have a lot of familiar faces working on DR2. It's in good hands."

Multiplayer v Single

While the current trend amongst many strategy games is to create a great multiplayer game first, and a single player game second, Pandemic wants players to have the best of both worlds.

"In regards to multiplayer DR2, we're looking at a lot of different things that'll allow more players in a game than Dark Reign did," says Borrud. "We're also looking at different features and ways of making multiplayer interesting - and we think a lot of that will have to do with cooperative play. Admittedly, we put less emphasis on single player in DR. It's a different situation with Dark Reign 2. A lot more effort has been put into the single player aspect. The person who doesn't like to play multiplayer will have a really cool single player experience with DR2."

"We're definitely taking some risks, in terms of the gameplay and where we're taking the genre. But the genre needs that."

Amen to that.

March Stepnik

STATE OF PLAY

What's happening
with all the
cool stuff

Adventure/RPG

David Wildgoose

Last month's column finished with a cryptically brief mention of **System Shock 2**. Not unreasonably, I figure you would probably like to know some more about the sequel to this shockingly underrated game. Firstly, it's being designed by a group called Irrational Games in conjunction with original developers Looking Glass. It ought to be noted that the Irrational staff features many who worked on **System Shock** and other LG games like **Thief** and **Flight Unlimited**.

Continuing the incestuous nature of the project is the fact that SS2 will use a modified version of the "Dark Engine" used in the forthcoming **Thief**. Unlike that game, however, Irrational are promising to include multi-



player capabilities, with the current goal of 4-player co-op play sounding highly enticing. Conversely, one of **System Shock**'s greatest strengths was the sense of paranoia that resulted from exploring the space station in virtual isolation. It will be interesting to see how this affects the multi-player game, and vice versa.

Regarding the plot, it appears that Shodan, the nasty computer AI who taunted you throughout the first game will return, though in what guise remains to be seen. Irrational are understandably keen to maintain the anxious atmosphere in the sequel, so expect a similar setting. Much of the game will again take place on board a space station with the occasional excursion into "cyberspace".

A greater emphasis on RPG elements is planned. You'll begin as one of three "classes" and be able to further customise skills throughout play, depending on whether you want to be a weapons or technical expert, hacker, scientist, or even develop psionic abilities. Likewise, your weapons are configurable and allow you to modify them to suit your purpose and style of play, while those psionic powers take the form of implants that you can mix and match.

What I really liked about playing **System Shock** was that I never felt constrained by the defined limits of some gameplay genre. Bravely, the designers seemed to abandon prevailing attitudes about what constituted a first-person shooter or an RPG. If Irrational adopt the same approach to the sequel it should be a success.

Action

George Argy

Current Game Versions:

Doom Legacy: 1.25

QuakeWorld: 2.30

Quake2: 3.20

Unreal: 2.19

Probably the sweetest news this month is the financial press release from GT.

What could possibly be exciting about a financial press release? Absolutely nothing, except that two words that were not meant to be uttered by GT or Epic for another month or so slipped out: **Unreal Tournament**.

Nothing more has been said about this Freudian slip by GT, and Epic refuse to comment, but it's pretty obvious that Epic have been working on an enhanced, multiplayer version of Unreal set to compete against an



enhanced, multiplayer version of a different game. Looks like we're in for a multiplayer game showdown...

Speaking of the next instalment in the Quake trilogy, **Quake III Arena** is looking mighty fine (like you need to be told by now). Some features that have been shown off in screenshots look set to blow away any game engine we've seen to date. Funky stuff like totally realistic reflective and shadowing effects, Predator-like invisibility and curved surfaces means we're going to see the most natural architecture and player models ever seen in a computer game. Now if only **Tomb Raider III** had curved 'surfaces'...

By now, most gamers are used to the fact that many games are released in near-perfect condition, with some bugs to be expected and 'non-essential' features such as co-op play to be released in a future patch(es). Well congratulations go to Take 2 interactive who have set new standards for producing incomplete games. **Spec Ops**, a game with the greatest of potential and arguably the inspiration behind **Rainbow Six**-type games, was probably the buggiest game released in 1998. To add insult to injury to all those who forked out good money to buy it, Take 2 have released an 'add-on pack' that adds (no surprises here) deathmatch and co-op play, as well as a few extra missions. Well done.

Strategy

Brett Robinson

Current Game Versions:

Total Annihilation: 3.1

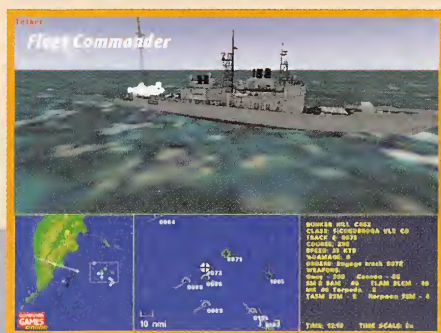
Dark Reign: 1.4

Starcraft: 1.03

Age of Empires: 1.0b

Whoever said 'Patience is a virtue' never had to spend months (or possibly years) waiting for the release of a game. From a gamer's perspective patience is a bastard, and it's something that we have to deal with on a daily basis. As 1998 draws to a close, many more strategy games have had their releases postponed than have been released. With so many titles due out in the first quarter of 1999, it's time (once again) to play the waiting game.

Screenshots and pre-alpha versions of



some relatively obscure games have surfaced, and one look at these is sure to induce a response that Pavlov himself would be proud of. Although Jane's would like us to believe that *Fleet Commander* is purely a strategy title, it is actually a peculiar hybrid of the action, sim and strategy genres. *Fleet Command* will give us what many have only dreamed of: complete and autonomous control of the world's most advanced naval fleets. You'll be tasked with maintaining peace in an increasingly hostile world where crises emerge with the regularity of US presidential scandals. Frigates, destroyers and a multitude of smaller ships will constitute the bulk of each fleet, with all of them playing an essential role in defence from and the suppression of enemy forces. We don't yet know whether the ability to command submarines and engage in anti-submarine warfare will be implemented, but just the thought gets us weak at the knees.

Megamedia Australia have begun developing an adventure/RTS game called *Ancient Conquest*. The game will be set in ancient Greece during a time when the gods have, in fits of rage, unleashed hordes of evil spirits on the unsuspecting populace. It then becomes your missions to embark on a quest for the legendary Golden Fleece. Combining *Age of Empires* style resource management with an emphasis on nautical warfare, interest in *Ancient Conquest* is sure to snowball as it appears on store shelves in the next few weeks.

Sims

Maj. Ian Lindgren

Still with my nautical theme of the last issue, things are sure hotting up for *Jane's Fleet Commander*. I've looked at some of the pre-betas and I like what I see. Ships, subs, and aircraft from some 16 nations, so there will be plenty to look at. The Naval NTIDS symbology is standard in situation displays, and you should see plenty of "Vampire, Vampire in bound at Mach 3 bearing 275 impact in 13 seconds!". You'll earn your dollar as the ship's Principle Warfare Office in this game! I'm yet to see how it integrates with *688(I)*, but we'll soon see with its release date still as February/March 99.

Who thought we were running out of WWII sims? News is that Dynamix plan two



new releases in the first half of the year, *Aces of the Pacific 2* and *Aces Over Europe 2*. Have we seen enough of this era, or will it get better still? Still in the same era, Infogrames is planning to release *Fighter Duel 2.0* by mid year. The original game was released by Phillips and was a flop, but this one will offer 40 different types of WWII era fighters, including a wide variety of single and multi-engined aircraft as well as first-generation jets. Ever wonder how the German Me-262 jet fighter might fare against the similarly designed Japanese NiKi Shiden? Wait and see!

Psygnosis are also planning to get into the WWII fray with *Wings of Destiny* due for release in April/May 99. This is a little more light hearted than most games using stylised 1940-ish comic book artwork, imaginary characters, and dramatic perspectives to drive home a melodramatic plot. It will feature four campaign games comprising 50 historical missions, set in different regions of Europe and North Africa.

SSI have confirmed April 99 as the release date for *Flanker 2*. Read all about it at www.flanker2.com.

Finally, some scuttlebutt about new and as yet undefined games. Digital Integration may be working on a new Harrier Jump Jet sim. Graphic Simulations on *F/A-18 4.0*, and the most exciting thing from my perspective is news that DID are working on a *Challenger II* tank sim. I wonder if it will integrate with *Total Air War*? If it does it will be a killer!

Online

Gareth Jones

Shadow Factor Software's Battlefield Communicator has been mentioned in this column before, and it's still in beta development, with patches and enhancements being added on a regular basis. Head to www.shadowfactor.com to take a look for yourself. On a slightly different tack, Multitude Software have also been developing voice communication software for gaming, but only in a proprietary sense. Art Min, ex-Looking Glass Studios member, has formed Multitude with a few dedicated friends, and they've managed to create a rather nifty game called FireTeam which uses their proprietary communication software called 'TeamTalk'. The game itself is rather simple and easy to learn, but it requires plenty of teamwork to



master, as it pits up to four teams of four people each against each other in a real time X-Com style game. It's well worth a look, check it out at www.fireteam.com. But that's not all, Resounding Software's Roger Wilco has been around for quite a while now as a stand alone application that will work with games such as Quake, Q2, AoE, Diablo, Unreal, Jane's F-15, and plenty more. I haven't been able to try it out for myself, but from what I hear Resounding have a bit of work to do to catch up to Battlefield Communicator's levels of configurability and performance. Check out www.rogerwilco.com to try it out for yourself though.

Chris Roberts, of Wing Commander fame, is currently at work with his new company, Digital Anvil on four games that cover a range of genres. Of interest to us here is 'Freelancer', a space exploration and combat sim that will be multiplayerable with up to 100 players online. Roberts has promised that Mark Hammill will be nowhere near the project. There's no website up at the time of going to press, but keep an eye on www.microsoft.com/games/da for more information as it's released.

Lastly, but definitely not least, it's time to talk about UO again. Well, specifically the lovely comment from Raph Koster about a local server for us UO fans here. Smart business sense, perhaps, but are that many people going to buy the game if they have to put up with the lag of using overseas servers? You might want to let OSI/EA know your thoughts on the matter at www.owo.com/mail.html

APACHE HAVOC

After briefly facing extinction, hardcore heli sims are looking safe and reaching new heights.

Category Flight Sim
Players 1 to a lot!
Publisher Razorback/Empire
Available January

Let me just start by saying that I was "gob-smacked" when I sat in the cockpit turning and burning without the blades engaged. I pushed chase view, and there it sat, the veritable Longbow Apache in the deck of an aircraft carrier. An incredible sight; the rotor blades drooped down as they do on a real chopper. I pushed the cyclic forward and the blades tilted in all directions! I engaged the blades and then switched to chase view again, and as the blades built up speed, they levelled out. I gave it a smack of collective, and low and behold, as the Apache lifted, the blades "coned" upwards as they took the load! An incredible level of detail!

The Russians are coming!

This sim has been built for cooperative game-play. For your money you will get two sims in one box (read two CDs, manuals etc). The AH64D Longbow Apache and the Russian Mil-28N Havoc B. The design team is UK based, and I noticed that the Apache is based on the UK export version (more on this in the "Plus" element of the Review next month).

The next thing I noticed was that the key-strokes for the Target Acquisition System, that is, the air/ground radar, Day-Time TV (DTTV), Forward Looking Infra-Red (FLIR) etc were similar to Jane's Longbow Apache, so my learning curve was not too high in these critical areas. Changing the range on the air radar did not change it in the ground radar; an improvement on Jane's! You could also change the sweep angle of the radar, and see and ID friendly enemy or

both; great situational awareness capabilities.

30 internal and external views were available. The Apache has two Multifunction Displays (MFDs) and the Havoc one. Both could be zoomed, and while the FLIR and DTTV laser, etc, were not enabled on the Beta, this feature should give unparalleled accuracy if it gets into the level of detail that Jane's Apache does.



Even more accurate and realistic than the previous, Apache Havoc looks to reach new heights.

wipers on! You do in this game, and it makes flying difficult! Moreover, after you pass through the storm, your canopy remains "greasy" for about 5 minutes as all the grime blows off. Good stuff! All-weather missions in the day, night, dusk and dawn! An accurate simulation of the all weather capability of both helos.

Nature is the enemy!

The next danger is the environment, as it is alive with air, ground and naval units from both sides, fighting their own war element of the battle, concurrently with yours. You even get to see their changing dispositions (and the front line moving) on your moving map display. The enemy ground units even rotate and

engage you, and if you are close enough, you will see them "button up" before firing, and attack radars revolving.

This is supported by a dynamic campaign engine where you will be able to destroy critical lines of communication, such as bridges to force choke points, or convoys, to stop enemy resupply. Tactics!

The game will offer novice to expert game play. Whether it is played as a single or multiplayer game, Apache Havoc seems to usher in never seen before features.

Maj. Ian Lindgren



Ski-lift cables

The terrain looked good for a "not quite final" beta. In the end it will support D3D and 3Dfx. It is designed for low-level helicopter combat and includes sunken riverbeds, forests and hills with vegetation; all the better to use for cover and concealment. It also includes man-made features such as power lines. So the enemy, and your own flying skills, are not your only threat!

Still on graphics, and again a first! Sure we've had rain and snow before, but not so much that it required the windscreen



FIGHTER SQUADRON

Screamin' Demons Over Europe

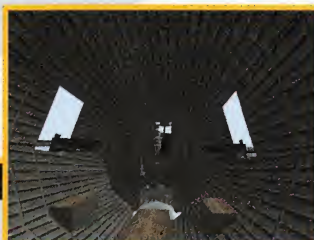
Another great WWII flight sim, more happy gaming ahead, more burning planes going down. Oh happy days.



The hard-core system requirements might put some people off, but for hard-core simmers this is the goods

Simply stunning

I've got to say that even in the Beta, the graphics are simply stunning, with supporting detail such as wings that flex as you enter a high-G turn, to undercarriages that take the impact of landing and either hold or break. Supporting this is a great aircraft damage model where aircraft don't just explode all at once. Bits and pieces fall off gradually unless you hit a critical element, and then "crump" the whole thing comes apart! At other times a wing or tailplane might come back in on you, and if you don't move quick enough, you'll be damaged too. Smoke emanates



or multi-engined aircraft! In these you can assume the position of pilot, bombardier or any one of the gunner positions! And you can hot swap between them! And you can hot swap into other aircraft in your flight! Sound good? It looks good, sounds good and feels good.

The game has 30 unique missions which sounds a little limited, but Activision advise that a Mission Generator will be included so you will be able to add to the canned missions. Which, with 90 different flight characteristic settings sounds like it will be a challenge for all, from novice to dedicated enthusiast.



from the aircraft beginning with a whitish gray color, turning into a thick black smoke, then later engulfing the entire aircraft with flames as it plummets to the ground. Very nicely done.

3D pilots man all of the aircraft, and while I could not fly in

squadrons, the game briefs say that each pilot has four types of artificial intelligence. Skill: the ability to successfully attack/hit/dodge. Aggression: the ability to act without orders and attack. Loyalty and Morale: will your squadron mates stay in the fight as long as you do? Sanity: what type of suicidal risks is the pilot likely to take. I think riding as the tail gunner in the latter should prove interesting to say the least!

Barnes Wallis

Ground graphics are impressive too. You'll see farmhouses, cities, dams, fortifications overlooking the ocean on either side of the English Channel, castles and many villages and towns. All are targetable, and burn quite nicely too! Good bombardier action in these places.

Another aspect to this game is the ground action. You can use the many camera views to look at objects on the ground, such as enemy anti aircraft artillery about to open up on you! It too, is manned, so you can see that significant effort has gone into this game to give you a multi-dimensional experience.

The game does come with some severe overheads though. At the moment the recommended processor is P266 with 64MB RAM and a 3Dfx card. Nonetheless, I'm once again looking forward to the completed product, so I can assume all the positions on the multi-engined aircraft, and I'm hoping that the sound will be further improved.

Maj. Ian Lindgren



Category Flight Sim
Players 1-16
Publisher Parsoft/Activision
Available January

Picture this...I've just finished my review on European Air War (EAW), which is truly stunning, and I open up a final Beta of Fighter Squadron: Screamin' Demons over Europe (FSSD). Install, leap into the awesome Mk IV Typhoon. Push the ignition key, watch the prop start to spin, engine cough, and feel the kick through the force feedback joystick, screen shake, sound from both exhausts, catch and wow! EAW has competition already.

Hot swapping fun

Set in the latter half of WWII FSSD has two European and one African campaign area. Once again you fly for the English, German or US forces, but this time it's different. Not only can you act as a pilot in single engined aircraft, but also in dual

Delta Force

Category Combat Sim
Players 1
Publisher Novalogic
Available Soon

They're the best of the best, the veritable cream of the crop. Only the best Green Berets, SEALs, Rangers and whatever else there is are eligible, and they're the elite counter-terrorism force for the US. None of this namby pamby Rainbow Six crap, this is the real deal.

And this is a fairly realistic sim too, though concessions have been made so that the game is still fun to play. Anyone familiar with the mouse and keyboard configuration used in Quake and the like will be immediately at home for example, but Delta Force definitely isn't 'just another FPS'.

Developers Novalogic have gone to some effort to get the game as realistic as possible, with real weapon sounds, realistic weapon ballistics, and no health meters (if you're shot,

you're dead). The missions won't be of the 'kill everything you see' variety either. Most times you'll be heavily outnumbered so the less attention you attract the better, and co-ordinating with your teammates will be crucial to your success.

One of the most attractive features of Delta Force is the range of multiplayer options that will be available. Along with a dedicated server (Novaworld, hosted in the States) with the capacity for up to 32 players in the same game, you'll also be able to run local games through either a network or the internet. And we're not just talk-



Is this the Next Big Genre? Real time, first person military strategy sims? Virtual war, eh....

ing deathmatch either. Delta Force will be able to be played co-operatively (up to 8 players), as well as deathmatch varieties like capture the flag, king of the hill, and team deathmatch.

We've only been able to take a look at a beta version so far, but it was great fun to play, and if the mission structure is well done and if multiplayer works as well as we hope then this is going to be a very polished game. We'll let you know.

Myth II: Soulblighter

Category Real time strategy
Players 1-TBA
Publisher Bungie
Available 1st Quarter '99

Bungie Software had been around for a long time, and had achieved legendary status for their previous Mac only games, but in PC land we'd hardly heard of them before Myth. That all changed quickly

with Myth which was at once extremely engaging, different enough to keep our attention, and plenty of fun to boot. Myth II: Soulblighter is well on its way now, and the indications are that it's going to be even better, much more than just an expansion pack/cash-in on the success of the initial release.

The graphics engine, already impressive, has been tweaked

This 'aint no cash-in sequel, or at least it doesn't look like one.



and refined, with a terrain mesh roughly 4 times as tight, allowing for much more detail in the terrain and better unit pathing. The units, although they are still sprite based, now have twice as many frames of animation, and non 3Dfx accelerator owners will be pleased to note that Direct3D will now be supported as well as 3Dfx native mode. There will also be rain, snow, water and fire effects, with 3D fire becoming a very useful weapon when your archers make use of their flaming arrows.

Along with the flame equipped archers, there's also a host of other new units to make use of and deal with, including Stygian Knights (a bit like the Bezerkers

of old), Mauls (nasty and fast man sized pigs, sort of), Heron Guards (like samurai swordsmen), and Mortar Dwarves (erm, Dwarves with Mortars, natch).

Bungie have even gone down the Quake path and decided to include a sophisticated but simple level editor (called Loathing) and a 'tag' editor (to change units, and other game variables) called Fear. And for those of you that found the original Myth just a little too hard even on easy level, Bungie have tweaked the difficulty settings to make the easy levels, well, easy this time around, though the 'legendary' setting will, they say, be extremely taxing even for Myth veterans. Bring it on!

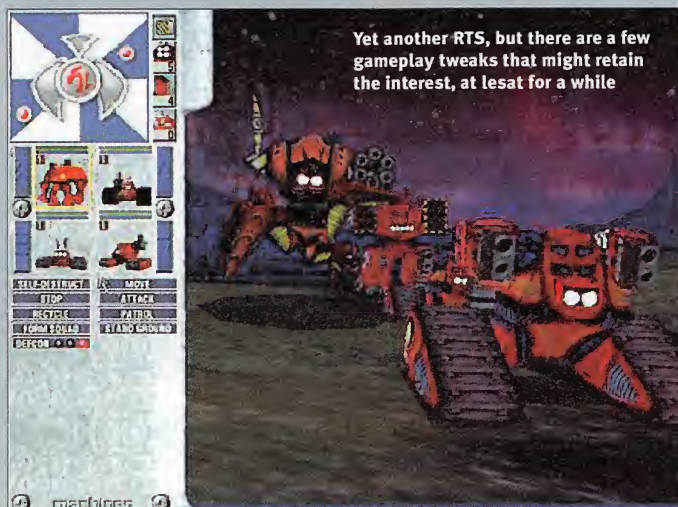


Machines: Cold as Steel

Category RTS
Players 1-TBA
Publisher Acclaim
Available Mid '99

Acclaim had, up until now, managed to stay out of the RTS genre. But the lure has proved too much, and they've decided to weigh in to this already highly congested genre with their effort - *Machines: Cold as Steel*. It's a game that has a familiar Acclaim look, but seems to bear a fairly large debt to games such as *TA for the PC*, not that this is a bad thing, mind.

The maps for *Machines* will make use of 3D elevated terrain, rather than the often used 2D map, and the terrain will have an effect on unit movement, firing distances, and line of sight as well. We're not just talking about a couple of little hillocks thrown in, *Machines* promises to have huge areas with radical differences in terrain elevation throughout. The units, too, haven't been forgotten, and will



be entirely polygon-based, as will all the structures in the game which is a nice departure from the present standard.

But this doesn't look like just another *TA/Starcraft* clone, there are quite a few gameplay features that Acclaim and developers Charybdis will be implementing. Interestingly, you will also be able to drive your units into tun-

nels and inside structures to hide or plan an ambush and so on. And then there's features like the ability to view the battlefield from a number of perspectives, including the de rigueur overhead 'eye-in-the-sky' mode, but also from a third person behind view to take a look at a particular skirmish close up, or even from within a unit of your choosing.



All these features plus things such as a set of over 20 customisable units to build, a research tree, and cool units like spies on offer, this is an RTS game, but it's definitely not looking like an RTS clone.

Snow Wave: Avalanche

Category Snowboard sim
Players 1-TBA
Publisher TBA
Available 1st/2nd Qtr '99

The console systems have seen a huge growth in snowboarding sims of late, though those of us in PC land have yet to sample the sim of this growing exxtreme sport. But thanks to Midas Interactive Entertainment, out of Holland, we'll soon be cruising the slopes and pulling off radical moves with the best of 'em. Too cool, dude!

No, seriously, this actually does look to be quite a bit of fun, in an arcade-y kind of way. First things first - it's not a console port! Rejoice, for this means that a genuinely impressive 3D engine has been used for the game capable, say Midas, of moving 600 polygon snowboarders at 30fps down a rather nicely detailed track in 3Dfx or PowerVR mode. We've only seen a fairly early beta, but the boarders did move very smoothly, and there was a very

impressive level of detail too.

There will be a good variety of ways to show people that you are, as the press release so eloquently states "the most complete and brilliant snowboarder of all times!!". You'll be choosing from downhill slalom mode over 6 different tracks, in time trial, time attack, ghost chase modes, or against up to four other competi-

tors. Perhaps just catching some totally radical air is more your style? You'll be pleased to note that there's both big jump mode (with tricks!) as well as big jump races with more than 20 jumps. And, of course, there's the 'xtreme' tour, where the high speed board-



ercross slalom meets big jump races. We're not sure exactly what that means, but it sure sounds exciting!

You will be able to multiplayer as well via IPX, modem or serial connections, and there's a variety of surfers to choose from too, each with different moves and tricks to pull off. It's not chess, but it sure looks like fast, furious fun, and there's nothing wrong with that at all.

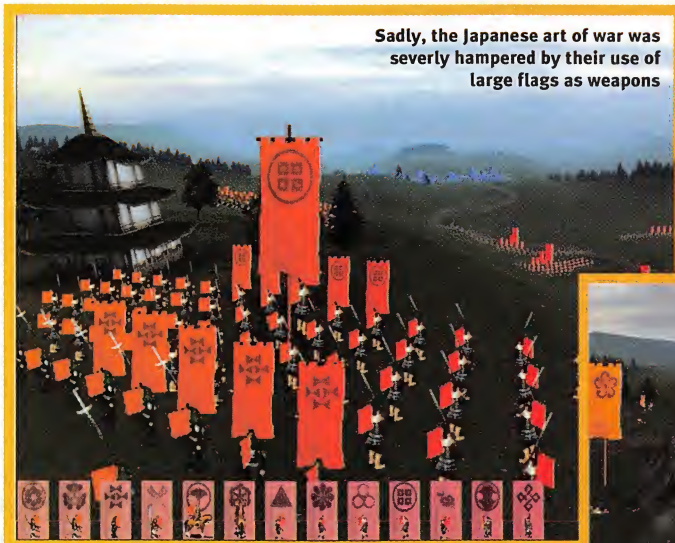
Shogun

Category RTS
Players 1-16
Publisher Electronic Arts
Available March 1999

With the release dates of most titles sliding back several months, the first quarter of 1999 will be party time for many gamers. Having been developed in almost total secrecy, Shogun (the RTS game formerly known as Taisho) has, like the proverbial Ninja, crept out of the shadows and taken almost everyone by surprise.

Shogun will be set in 16th century feudal Japan: historically a time when Japan was divided into several warring factions. Each faction was controlled by a Daimyo (feudal lord) whose ultimate goal was to become Shogun: the supreme dictator of all of Japan.

Shogun will cater to the tastes of all strategy gamers with three very different ways of playing. Players interested in the strategic elements of expansionism will be able to play with an



emphasis on resource management and politics, while those who prefer the tactical side of warfare will be able to play a C&C-style set of individual battle scenarios. In addition, a third mode of play will combine the two elements in a campaign mode that will take several weeks to complete!

In all modes, battles will rage on an unprecedented scale involving tens of thousands of combatants. As well as traditional Samurai, units such as

Warrior Monks and Archers will be available. Players with a penchant for under-handed tactics will also appreciate the inclusion of Ninja assassins and Geisha; masters of (among other things) espionage.

Panoramic 3D landscapes will play an integral role in tactical battles, with weather also being an important determinant of morale and, consequently, conflict outcomes. Multiplayer battles with up to 16 players will be



a key feature, and the developers have created a unique play-by-email system to cater for those without the luxury of a T3 net connection.

Slated for release in March of next year, Shogun is fast becoming one of the most hotly anticipated RTS games ever. More news as development continues.

Brett Robinson

AFL 99

Category AFL sim
Players 1-TBA
Publisher EA Sports
Available 2nd Quarter '99

When we first heard that EA Sports were publishing an AFL game, we were a little surprised - it's not exactly a world famous sport. Happily enough, AFL 98 turned out to be a great game (though it did turn out to have its share of bugs), and the sequel looks like it's going to be even better.

Because it's from EA, there's the usual high level of attention



to detail, so things like full rosters for each and every team, 'real' stadiums to play in, accurate team kits, and commentators like love-him-or-hate-him

Bruce McAvaney. Those of you that did purchase the original will probably be very happy to note that this time there will definitely be team chants for more than just the Swannies - though not definitely for every team, with the developers saying that they might opt for a generic chant. The pugilistically inclined should be pleased by the news that you will be able to scuffle and fight in AFL 99, though a tribunal (of sorts) will be in place so you'll have to pay the consequences.

Big news just in: Bruce McAvaney will say "special" in his own inimitable way. Top stuff!

Other features set to be included this time include much more realistic tackles, spoils, and handballing, and an all round more realistic experience of playing 'footy'. To help this along, the AI for both CPU opposition and CPU controlled teammates has been markedly improved so that forwards to lead for the ball and defenders will track their matchups. Also, you'll be able to trade and buy new players, and there's the possibility for extras like Brownlow medals, and team theme songs to be included as well. If it ends up as good as it sounds, well, we're definitely going to want to see that.



Panzer Elite

Category Tank sim
Players 1-TBA
Publisher Psygnosis
Available 1st Quarter '99

There's something rather enjoyable about tooling around in vehicle equipped with 6-inch steel plated armour, armed to the teeth with shells explosive enough to destroy other similarly armoured tanks, especially back in the days before antiseptic no-see-kill technology took the visceral enjoyment out of war...or at least war sims. Panzer Elite places you at the end stages of WW2, roughly between 1942 and 1944, in command of a three or four man squadron of either German or American tanks over a host of realistic and fairly historically accurate missions.

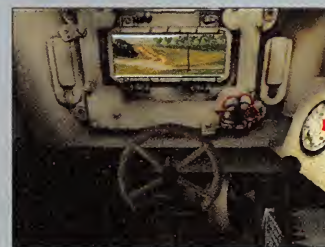
Panzer Elite is marketed as a serious simulation - this isn't an arcade point-and-shoot game which, it has to be said, is a bit of a departure for Psygnosis, and though Psygnosis don't have a

pedigree for war sims, developers Wings Simulations do, and they look to have created a very decent and realistic game. You'll be able to choose from a good variety of tanks from both the German and American forces (mostly Panzers for the Krauts, and Shermans for the Seppos), and there will be a high degree of realism in the design and implementation of the tanks themselves. Wings have used actual blueprints of tanks from the era to create their models, all with accurate weapon loads, speeds, armour and general capabilities.

There should be plenty of variety in the missions available, with four theatres of operation encompassed; Normandy, Sicily, North Africa, and Italy with a



total of 80 individual missions on offer. Thankfully, multiplayer will be on offer, with support for LAN, serial and modem play (but probably not TCP/IP Internet play, dammit), and for those that wouldn't class themselves in the hard core military simmer category, there will be scalable realism settings for the game too. It supports 3D acceleration, it supports Force Feedback, and it looks damn good. More soon.



Though the developers have taken the time to get the characteristics of the tanks correctly, this doesn't merely look like a hard-core tank sim. It looks like plenty of fun too

UEFA Manager 1999

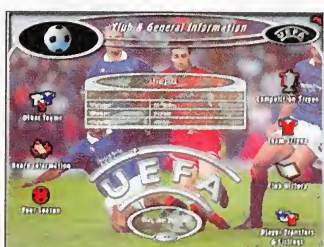
Category Management sim
Players 1-TBA
Publisher Infogrames
Available Soon

Football is the world's most popular game, and along with the action/arcade simulations, the management aspect can make for plenty of long term enjoyment. There's more to the genre than just the Championship Manager series though, as quite a few other developers have or are making decent attempts at the genre, and UEFA Manager is definitely a decent attempt at the very least.

In an interesting move, rather than just offer a set of teams for a player to choose from, UEFA Manager offers a number of different goals for your time in the managers seat, including the standard 'career mode'. There are options like choosing to be a caretaker manager for a year (with an option of continuing if you do well), 'club crisis', where you have one sea-



The addition of some interesting and varied modes of play make this an interesting looking title



son to stop the slide of the team and begin rebuilding or you're out, 'money maker' where the previous manager spent all the money (badly) and you have to maintain the results while building up funds, 'domestic trouble' where the club has just been taken over by a big business - you get 80 million and one year to win the league and cup dou-



ble, 'EUFA Glory' where the club has just been publicly listed and you get 50 million and 5 seasons to win all three European Cups.

Though we've only seen a fairly early version, it does look like the goods. The menu system is well laid out and functional, the player stats are up to date and realistic, you can manage teams from 6 European leagues, and though you don't get a graphical representation of the games you can get play by play commentary as it happens. There were a few problems with game results, but we're told this will be fixed for the final version. Time will tell, but we're looking forward to finding out if the end product is as good as it looks.

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...and the seas became as BLOOD.

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REVIEWS

BIGGEST XMAS EVER!



It's HUGE! Compared to last year's dismal turnout, 1998 has been one of the great years for gamers. Everything happened; 3D accelerators matured, as did their implementation in games. Two dead genres were revived in grand style - Flight Sims and Racing Sims. Online gaming kicked in with dedicated games such as the incredible Ultima Online, the single player game has started to regain the attention it deserves... And while I'm at it, PC PowerPlay won Magazine of the Year.

All indications are that 1999 will be a monster of a year. We're so happy! For the first time in ages we're not merely playing the best game around to keep ourselves busy, instead we're forced to put on hold awesome games while we finish even more awesome games. Too good!

Plenty of reviews this month, too many to form a general summary, no common theme here except that the quality is almost uniformly high.

Blessed be the gamer, for life is rich. Go forth and play!

Ben Mansill
Editor

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THE PC POWERPLAY SCORING SYSTEM

95%+	PLATINUM The Best. Virtually faultless, reserved for games which cause loss of sleep from thinking of nothing else.
90-94%	GOLD A classic. Either an unquestionable example of superiority within its genre, or a ground breaking game that'll be setting trends.
80-90%	A strong, eminently playable game. Hard to fault and likely to still be on the hard drive in 6 month's time.
60-80%	Competent and generally enjoyable. Flaws or mediocrity hold these games back from higher ratings.
40-60%	Average and ordinary. Not bad, not good. Ideal gift.
0-40%	Bad, really bad. Boring, shamelessly unoriginal, cheap and horrible.

POWERSLIDE

Anyone who likes a good driving game will love Powerslide. Same goes for folks who just love a good game, period.

It's Australian. This is important for you to know from the outset, and for you to bear in mind for the remainder of this review. Because, you see, Powerslide isn't merely a good, or even 'World Class' game, which happens to be Australian. No, Powerslide is much more than that - it is the best game in the world of its type by a huge margin, and it just happens to be Australian.

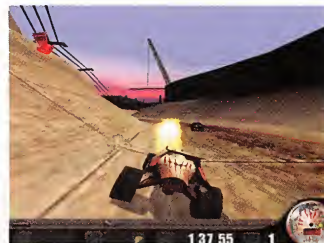
We shouldn't be surprised, for the list of kick-ass Aussie games grows almost by the week, but Powerslide is just such a magic treat of a game, that half the time people we show it to refuse to believe it came from anywhere but the U.S. or U.K. Such is the Tall Poppy syndrome, we guess...

Fastest 3D ever

Powerslide is a winner for two simple, yet powerful reasons: 1. It's a great game, and 2. The 3D engine is the fastest in the world, making said great game run as smooth as you'd want, with the added bonus of it looking stunning. More about the technical wizardry that gave birth to Powerslide later, for now though, let's talk cars and dirt!



There are several games out now that could be grouped into the same category as Powerslide - among them Speedbusters, DethKarz and S.C.A.R.S. Let's call them 'futuristic arcade racers'. The operative word here is "arcade", in that these games don't pretend to be hardcore driving simulations, they are easy and unintimidating to get into and are set in a fantasy universe.



The driving model is perfection personified



Natural drive

It's no accident of design that Powerslide feels so wonderful to drive. For the last 4 years the team at Ratbag have been perfecting not only their almighty 3D engine, but also, equally importantly; the dynamics of the cars you'll drive in it. By the time you've completed your first lap in Powerslide you'll know what you're dealing with, and you'll love it. The way these cars feel is so utterly unique, so different to anything else, and yet it all feels so incredibly natural and intuitive.

All these games look great, all have funky bits like power-ups, weapons and mighty jumps, and all but Powerslide feel like you're just there STEERING, as opposed to DRIVING. It's almost unfortunate for Powerslide that it will be grouped with these dull and lifeless software toys, or at least it would be if Powerslide didn't possess qualities that lift it above others of the genre - and indeed create one unto itself, that of the 'Arcade Simulation'.

Imagine driving indoor go-karts and you're halfway towards understanding how Powerslide feels. Their power is moderate at best, so energy conservation is essential. Grip is minimal, largely due to the track surface itself, so finding and sticking to a perfect racing line is just a waste of time, instead you've got to be aware of the vehicle and its position on the track at all times, taking advantage of opportunities and being fully prepared to improvise as



(above) The dam track, featuring one of the most exhilarating and exciting sequences in the game



necessary, provided you stay within the limits of the envelope. That's roughly half the equation, but Powerslide adds another factor, one that absolutely makes this game what it is, and that's real 3D terrain with bugger-all in the way of flat surfaces.

Outrageous track design

Upon these surfaces you will drive, race and have joyous fun. It all works because each Powerslide car is an independently-suspended futuristic dune buggy of a thing, bouncing in a

perfectly logical manner over often wildly undulating terrain. Combine the inherent driving style needed for Karting with the often outrageous track design and you've got a racing game like nothing else.

Naturally, there's some post-apocalyptic storyline which manages to explain away the hugely varying track style, but it's a driving game, so we shouldn't care too much about that. It's the track design that's important, and Powerslide's circuits are among the best ever seen in a racing



game. A severely large proportion of the Ratbag staff are hardcore racers themselves - a couple of them even compete in the National Karting Championships. Regardless of their primary job description, all Ratbag staff were encouraged to submit track designs. This free and democratic design process has resulted in tracks that are always a challenge, generally require a different driving style for each and are often extreme in originality.

My personal favourite is the Dam Track. After whipping around a particularly long powersliding bend (which involves passing under a bridge and through a tunnel, all in the same arc, you're faced with an enormous Dam

ahead. Keeping your energy high, you'll swing up and across the Dam, the view jerking momentarily sideways, before being flung off the edge sideways and airborne, with the wheels hopefully planting on the opposite wall for a slingshot into the next straight. Thrilling stuff! You'd think that a highly precise driving pattern is the only ticket to victory here, but each corner in each track has a surprisingly deceptive level of room to move, which you'll need, because as with all good racing, there's bound to be someone in front of you spoiling the party.





The multiplayer support is excellent, with stable code and a host of different ways to play. Love it love it love it!



their power or top speed, like every other game, but instead they drive smarter and more aggressively. Now this is champagne gaming!

Play Tag!

The game's single-player structure is stock-standard - either race any of the

Genetic Algorithms

Which, in the case of Powerslide, is a thoroughly wonderful and pleasing thing. Powerslide's #1 strength is the multiplayer. But so advanced is the A.I. (Artificial Intelligence), that racing against the computer is, for the first time, as satisfying as doing it with real live humans. Ratbag used "Genetic Algorithms" during development of the game. In essence, each computer car in Powerslide has been set loose on each track for the purpose of 'training'. As the car continues to lap, the variations in the racing line it takes are accumulated, then the best solutions the A.I. had developed were taken and "cross bred" until each had a database of competitive techniques. That's impressive enough, but in order to provide a truly 'human' feel, these algorithms are allowed to further mutate as you play the game. They learn new tricks! Just about every other racing game is forced to use 'canned solutions', where pre-set reactions are triggered by a specific set of parameters. Powerslide doesn't do this, nothing is predictable and on the higher difficulty levels the A.I. is exceptionally hard to beat. Changing difficulty doesn't make the opposition faster by simply boosting

tracks in a single race, or compete in the Championship, where as you win or place well in each of the three difficulty levels, new tracks are opened up and access to the next difficulty level is granted. Good and well and we wouldn't expect anything less, but being online gaming freaks, the lads at Ratbag came up with a few original ideas to keep the excitement fresh and different. Particularly cool is the 'Fox and Hound' sub-game. It's 'tag', basically. If you're 'it' you've got to stay on the run; get swiped and the swiper is 'it'. And on it goes until someone manages to stay 'it' for whatever pre-set period you chose at the outset. Making it really special are the purpose-designed tracks for Fox and Hound. They are huge expanses of playing area with ramps, tunnels and neat hiding places everywhere. This, together with the grenade launcher Fox and Hound lets you play with make it a major adrenaline rush of pure gaming fun.

For regular LAN or Online players, Powerslide should be an essential part of your diet. At our LAN parties, we used to start the day



with a few Moto Racer thrashes, simply because that game was 100% reliable for networking and it was an easy warm up to a hard weekend of deathmatching FPS and RTS games. Now we play Powerslide for exactly the same reasons, but for a hell of a lot longer than old Mr Moto! The multiplayer code in Powerslide is as good as Quake 2's, and superior in many ways. It's rock solid, can handle up to 12 racers with absolutely zero frame-rate loss and is super friendly to set up and run. Players can come and go in the middle of a race too, beautiful.

Essential gaming

It's been a rich few months for sim racing fans. Now that we've had a chance to play every new game through hard, clear winners in the genre have emerged. There are now only two racing games: Grand Prix Legends and Powerslide. Each is different to the other and each is infinitely better than the rest out there. You need both - GPL for satisfying the hardcore sim need to drive really fast, and Powerslide because it perfectly satiates every other need you have as a lover of gaming excellence. Powerslide is a game that wants for nothing more than you and your competitive attitude, plus of course; a need for big fun.

Ben Mansill



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Publisher GT Interactive
Price \$79.95
Rating G
Available Now

For It's big, happy fun. Running super-fast and looking super-pretty is a bonus too. Multiplayer support is as perfect as we could ever expect. Buy Australian!

Against True in-car 3D cockpits would have been nice, as well as an extra gear and a slightly meatier engine noise, but these are teensy little problems, really.

Need Win 95, P166MMX, 18MB RAM.

Want PII 233, 48Mb RAM, Voodoo 2 or Riva TNT.

3D SUPPORT

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POPULOUS: The Beginning

New gamers will just love it, while the oldies will enter the nostalgia zone.

In the Beginning, there was the Amiga 500. Actually, it was a little while after the Beginning. Only a decade ago. If you don't remember, you hooked it up to your T.V. and played snappy looking games like Speedball and Powermonger (well they were snappy for the time). It was the latest thing in 1989. But between PCs, Nintendo and Sega; the Amiga died in the ass. Consoles became the televisual game machines. I could go on all day, but my point is this... Everything old is new again!

Just as we hear word of a new Amiga to arise from the ashes, we are reintroduced to the famed, the incredible Populous series. One of my favourite titles on the Amiga, the original Populous was bloody rad: isometric view, cool spells (Armageddon! Armageddon!), little men thumping other little men at your will. It was good, clean fun. If you didn't catch Populous or Populous II, don't fret. Get excited! Bullfrog brings us the third instalment in the Populous series and it's not on the Amiga 500. Populous: The Beginning brings back all the fun of a game that only plays in God Mode, with a swag of great new features. This is real time strategy set in the stone age and it's super!

Interface heaven

The first impressive feature of Populous: The Beginning is what you see. The game world is clear and nicely detailed. You float above the action like some Greek god on a cloud. You are able to rotate the world, to improve your view (or fly around above it on your cloud like Monkey if you prefer!). The sense of perspective is damn effective and makes the world easy to navigate. Maybe your little tribesmen don't realise it but the world is round, so buildings, mountains and continents appear and disappear over the horizon. It's not picturesque by any means, but it's spot on for this style of game. Your command bar lies on the screen just



next to the game screen and is simple to understand for the first time player. In fact, the whole game interface is beautifully organised and this makes playing the game very easy.

The clincher, the thing that makes this a great game, is battle. Waging war in this game is as fun and funny as it gets. Your most important weapon is the Shaman, your high priestess mamma, she's got some really bad mojo. The magic spells you can rain down on your foes make for hilarious gameplay. Have your

Shaman zap some poor Brave with a fireball and watch him shoot up into the air and upon landing, wait for it, BOUNCE! Send a swarm of insects to pester the enemy and watch them run around like madmen. Lightning, tornadoes... is there no end to your power? Yes, battle is definitely where it's at - a major part of this game's charm is watching little men kick and poke one another for hours.



Big war

Most mission objectives are straight forward and usually involve destroying the enemy settlement and killing your opposing Shaman. Other missions have time limits and specific objectives. The variety is refreshing and as you progress through the game you accumulate more and more delicious spells, more units and tougher enemies. The

The halcyon days of God sims are back, finally. Ooooooh yeah!





The advantages of utilising a 3D world have been fully realised

challenge factor of the game is another bonus. You are often limited to the number of forces you can accumulate, so it isn't just a matter of churn 'em out and send 'em in (although there are cases where this works perfectly). You also need to coordinate your attacks, concentrating on different enemy targets. There is some strategy required! It is the great combination of simplicity and appeal that makes it a gorgeous gaming experience. The single player game is great but the multiplayer option is a gift. A multiplayer game of Populous: The Beginning would truly be a marvellous thing and no doubt it will be happening all too soon.

The only gripes I had with the game were with the control of units. If your Braves are at all



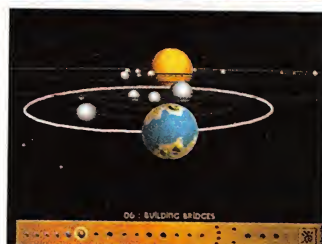
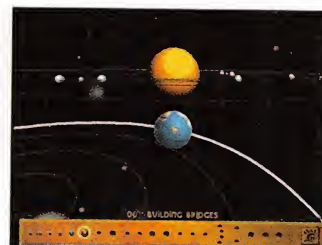
close to an enemy, whether you want them to or not, they will attack. You are unable to assign specific orders to units like you can in Civilisation 2. It would be useful to have a health bar over each fighting unit's head. You

might find yourself missing enemies with your Shaman's spells in tight situations, since there is no way to target them. If these problems were remedied, this would be the best game in a long time, instead of just being one of the best games.

Amiga nostalgia

If the Amiga did nothing else, it brought us Populous and for that it deserves thanks. Ten years later, Populous: The Beginning is brilliant light-hearted fun, it's challenging, engaging and easy to play. It is reminiscent of Starcraft and a worthy companion to it. This is a real-time strategy game with a difference. If you're a fan of strategy or primitive war or comedy, roll up 'cos here it is! It's a hell of a lot of fun and well worth the outlay. Populous is back and it rocks!

John Dewhurst



Though unit control leaves a little to be desired, this still marks the triumphant return of the seminal God game

PLUS+

www.bullfrog.ea.com/populous3/index.html

86%

Category RTS, God game
Players 1-4 (TCP/IP, IPX)
Publisher Bullfrog
Price \$TBA
Rating TBA
Available Now

For Super, fun gaming!
Easy to play, difficult to leave.
Beautiful and lush, will live long and prosper.

Against Being unable to easily tell damage to units is annoying at least. A fraction more control over units would have made this impeccable.

Need P166 16MB RAM, 12xCD, 4MB Direct3D card

Want not much else

3D SUPPORT
D3D, software

SHOGO: MAD

An FPS with a Manga twist, Shogo shows that Mechs can do more than just run around in circles

Shogo: MAD is a gorgeous new incarnation of the near-dead 'Mech' genre. It combines just the right depth of gameplay with lip-smacking special effects, in a world that's sooo similar to the ancient cartoon series Robotech that it's uncanny.

Like Robotech, Shogo has massive robot vehicles, unnecessarily huge explosions, a whistling pace, character love dramas, insane environmentalists, naughty relationships with girls from the enemy force, insane commanders, and finally NATO-approved non-radioactive Nukes that leave livestock and shopping centres intact.

It also has a strong visual appeal, holding the crisp polish of a well-made manga film.

I'm sorry to say this, but Mechwarrior is officially buried. The robots in Shogo make the 'Mechs' in Mechwarrior look like pathetic, clunking venerable geriatrics. And they're not called 'Mechs' any more. It's "MCA", which is a euphemism for "kick-arse demons of sooner than instant death".

Able to leap tall...

The scale of the MCA vehicle is simply monstrous. Ducking behind a skyscraper for cover, you accidentally step on a tiny parked car you didn't see behind you. A distant boom from somewhere near your feet, a miniature shockwave and little chunks of metallic shrapnel bounce away

in parabolic trajectories, trailing smoke. You shrug, step back into the highway and unleash a howling storm of hot rockets at two MCA units cowering behind the struts of an apartment block. The mess it makes litters several streets and fills an alleyway.



You're huge. And agile. And often called on to eradicate truly piddling opposition like tanks, jeeps and believe it or not, foot soldiers!

Of course you always have the option of stepping on them, thankfully, as shooting them is like trying to pin hundreds and thousands to the floor with a knitting needle. You end up losing your temper and creaming the entire area with a building-buster. However, the tables are turned in the pedestrian sections of the game where you are outside your vehicle,



We're talking about seriously huge weapons and explosions, almost to the point of overkill



and using handheld guns against troops in metal riot armour! In that mode, the tanks you laughed at and squashed before become very scary instruments of death.

Environmental war

The story is an engaging military epic set in a typical Neo-Tokyo-ish future setting, where a band of popular environmental

activists; "the Fallen", have formed a rogue anti-Government group, bent on toppling the elected office of the day. When they mobilised, they convinced almost half the nation's military personnel to join their cause. Suddenly, it's 50-50 civil war, both sides armed to the teeth with equally cutting edge technology. Except for your side, the establishment, that has an unfair advantage called the Neo-Nuke, which it can use to cook half the planet if necessary. Your insane Commander is itching to pull the trigger on the traitors and unleash mass destruction - the only thing holding him back is





his belief in your exemplary skills as an MCA Pilot. If you can bring down the rebel forces in a number of strategic commando attacks, you will save the lives of thousands of innocents.

Save the turtle

Kato energy is the resource of the future, sucked from the centre of the planet, much like the Materia magic from Final Fantasy. Of course, there's a big galactic turtle type thing that lives inside planet earth, and it's slowly dying from all our greedy exploitation of its life force. This is the bit that annoys our green fingered foes. Kato is the stuff that goes bang in your advanced combustion engines, laser batteries and explosives.

And speaking of things that go bang, you have a veritable smorgasbord to choose from! All the number keys are used up with unique weapons both when piloting your MCA, and getting

amongst it as a foot soldier. Naturally you have your handy boot dagger on foot, while the Armour packs a hundred-metre tempered katana blade for those close up and personal Mech-sized affairs. There is a simply dazzling array of rocket launchers, sniper rifles, autocannons, Uzis, laser blasters, plasma emitters, controlled incendiaries, M16s, Kato grenade launchers, shotguns, and hand-held anti-MCA howitzers. It's glorious! None of them are useless either, as each one has a specific purpose and ideal target where it comes into it's own.

You choose from one of four MCA models, each with varying attributes relating to play style, like speed, handling and durability. Each one has the ability to instantly transform into a high speed "hovertank" mode, in which you cannot fire, but can cover ground at an incredible rate of knots. You use it to tra-

verse the large open areas and long city streets between battles, naturally. In these interim moments you pick up radio instructions from your superiors, and commanding-officer-girl-friend. You encounter many scripted events, which are really theatrical and imaginative and conducive to the immersion factor. Your operator is often relaying contingency plans that are supposedly assembled from intelligence on the fly, which usually requires you to find something or manipulate your environment in some way. To help you along, they illustrate your task with little rolling camera view sequences that show you where to go. When you get there, you already recognise it, so you can act straightaway - it's just another of the little details that make Shogo a very polished experience.

Multiple endings

The story really is top notch, with dramatic emotional moments, like when you find out your ex-girlfriend (older sister of your new girlfriend), is still alive, and piloting an MCA for the Fallen. Oh, the heartbreak! The confusion!

It also has a few decision-based outcomes at key points, and two stellar, opposite endings - one of which sees you ambitiously taking on MCA units as a squashy pedestrian! Very challenging. And cool. Really, this is a splashy, pyrotechnic romp into a gorgeous Manga world. Highly recommended!

Ed Dawson



It's not quite on the same level as Half-Life, but Shogo is still plenty of fun

PLUS+



84%

Category First person shooter
Players 1-8 (IPX, TCP/IP, Modem)
Publisher GT Interactive
Price \$89.95
Rating M15+
Available Now

For Theatrical plot twists, great graphics and animation, and to top it all off you also get girly love sagas

Against Quite simple gameplay, although well-propped up with scripted mid-mission dramas. Multiplay leaves a little to be desired

Need P166, Win9x, 32MB RAM, 4XCD, Direct3D compatible accelerator, (P233 required for non 3D accelerated version)

Want P2 300, 64MB RAM, 12MB Voodoo2

3D SUPPORT

3Dfx accelerators and Direct 3D compatible cards supported

FALLOUT 2

Get the GECK, save the village, save the world, and do a bit of pimping on the side. Dungeons and Dragons this aint!

It's time for you narrow-minded RPG purists to run for cover. Fallout is back, and guess what! Still no comprehensive magic system! No haughty taughty talking elms, nor randy dwarves with peculiar mushroom addictions either. No chivalrous "Yes mil-days" nor "thees and thous". Instead, you get super flame throwers, spleen-rupturing mass energy weapons, gobs of explosives, Super Mutants, droids, pimping (what every Fallout player was begging for), and generally much more colourful and adventurous ways of communicating within the game world to other characters.

New school RPG

This is a trend that we here at PC PowerPlay, almost religiously, support. Alternatives, baby, is what the RPG genre desperately needs. We're not all Conan or Merlin wannabes. And the current ratio of "Dungeons and Dragons" style fantasy RPGs to non-D&D style ones seems to be about 10:1. Heck, even that's being generous - we're aware of only 2 other Sci-fi themed RPGs, and one of them happens to be last year's Fallout. Why have developers been so reluctant to bring us RPG's without a heavy Tolkein theme? It can be done and it can be well received - last year's Fallout is proof of that. While far from being perfect, Fallout, in many respects, got a lot of things right. Better yet, Fallout 2 is even more enjoyable.

Get the GECK

Fallout 2 follows on from the events that transpired in Fallout. You are the direct descendant of The Vault Dweller - the mysterious stranger (and also the character you played in Fallout) that single handedly saved the world and secured a distant future. Things aren't generally so rosy in a post-apocalyptic world though,

and thanks to nuclear fallout, your village is slowly dying. You're called to find the Garden Of Eden Creation Kit (or GECK) a device that offers your village salvation. First you have to prove yourself worthy of the task. Thus the game begins at the entrance to the Temple of Trials.

Adult ambiguities

The story obviously becomes much more complicated as you start to explore a post-apocalyptic California (where F2 is set) and diversifies depending on which type of character you like to play. You can play the good guy or the bad guy in Fallout 2, and just about every shade in between. In fact, the adult humour and moral ambiguity that is the Fallout trademark is

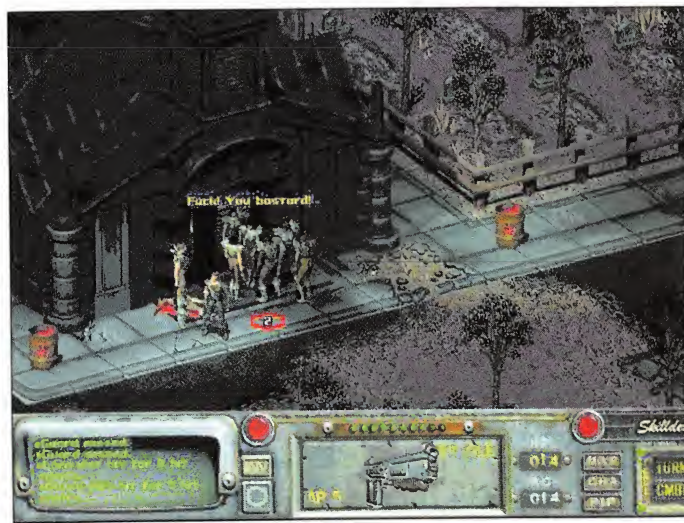
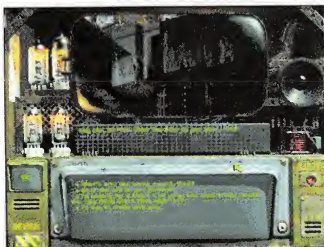


This game certainly rips it. Streetwise punks take on post-apocalyptic mutants. How warm!

parts of the Fallout 2 world you see, and which you will not. The overall game winning goal however, remains the same.

There were two overall design flaws within the original Fallout. Firstly, size-wise, the landmass was a bit lacking. As a result, the game seemed a little on the short side. Secondly, the combat (which covered the strategy and tactics sides of things) engine of Fallout - seemed to overshadow the whole storytelling aspect of the game. While combat was to many one of

back in the sequel. This has been really played up this time around, resulting in a much more diverse RPG. Throughout the game there are situations you come across that'll require you to make a decision on two case both of equal merit. One will clearly be the winner, while the other clearly the loser - but you'll only discover which after time. These decisions will affect which





Fallout's most appealing factors, the lack of depth in interaction and story left the overall experience a little lacking.

Bigger landmass

Black Isle Studios addressed both of these issues in Fallout 2. Firstly, the game world in which you play is huge! There are now 18 major locations to visit, as well as stacks of non major plot-related areas to explore. It's not just large empty spaces either. The world is hugely detailed and populated with scores of unique non player characters. The weapons and items count has greatly increased (yay for all you inventory management freaks), the majority of which are actually useful in the game. There's also many more ways to put these



items to use - which is a major consideration for RPGs. Fallout 2 has effectively doubled the quest count seen in Fallout. Need a break from the major quest? Go take part in a side quest, or thirty. Black Isle have also pulled the character level ceiling, so that if you wish to, you can wander around the game world and continue to rack up experience points.

Smart combatants

Black Isle have also given combat a look over. While the actual combat engine remains unchanged (the turn-based, action point model), party management has been introduced. You can set party member variables so that they behave more intelligently during combat. Tell them to go berserk or to hold back, get the to attack your attacker or to choose their own - combat in Fallout is a much tidier affair. You can also give your party items and weapons to use, and direct them to use them as you see fit. Yay!

Bah! Buggy!

Fallout 2 is however, a flawed masterpiece. The game is buggy, really buggy. At time of press, Interplay had announced that a patch fixing a score of major bugs within the game was soon to be published, and that they have

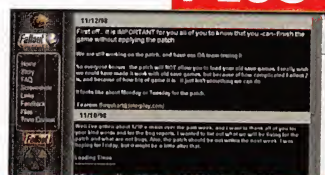
Underground, overground, the Fallout RPG, it pleases hardcore gamers, such as we.

already begun work on a second patch to fix other, larger bugs. Interplay had also announced that new features and locations will be included in the second patch as a peace offering.

Loading and saving times are still a little too long too. The game also often pauses to process the required game data. This is fine while you're loading up a new location, but when this happens mid combat or mid-stride into a building, the continuity is painfully butchered.

The other thing major thing is that it's extremely hard for you to make it through the early stages of the game as a diplomatic, non-aggressive character. While much of the quests have non-violent solutions, combat does play a large role in the game, leaving you at a major disadvantage without good combat skills. While it is rumoured that this character imbalance may be fixed in a future patch, it is not very likely.

PLUS+



<http://www.interplay.com/fallout2/>
Go here to keep up with the ongoing patch saga.



Some guy talking to a Non-Player Character. Ripping stuff!

True sequel?

Fallout 2 is to Fallout, just what Ultima VII: The Serpent Isle was to Ultima VII: The Black Gate - more a second part than a fully-fledged sequel featuring a new engine and all that jazz. While buggy, Fallout 2 is still one of the best RPGs around at the moment. Old timers will appreciate the enhancements and fine tuning that has gone into this game, while newcomers will fall under it's spell. See you in the wastelands!

March Stepnik

88%

Category RPG
Players 1
Publisher Interplay
Price \$89.95
Rating MA 15+
Available Now

For Wonderfully complex RPG that successfully steals bits and pieces from other more popular genres. There's plenty to see and do, and heaps of very amusing in-jokes (like 'Tragic' the card game. Love it!)

Against Bugs. As Fallout 2 uses the same engine as Fallout, the game occasionally feels like a bad, late night telemovie repeat. Long loading times on anything less than a MegaMachine

Need Pentium 166, 32MB RAM, Win 9x

Want P2 300, 128MB RAM

it's gonna be a ...



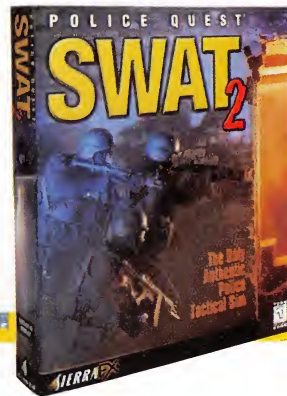
POLICE QUEST

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LAPD call-ups.

IT'S LIFE AND
DEATH IN L.A.....

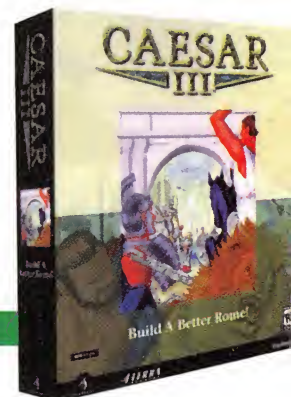


CAESAR III

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further than ever before*

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BETTER ROME

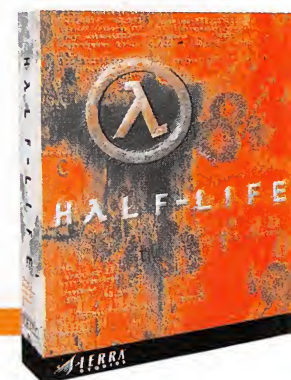
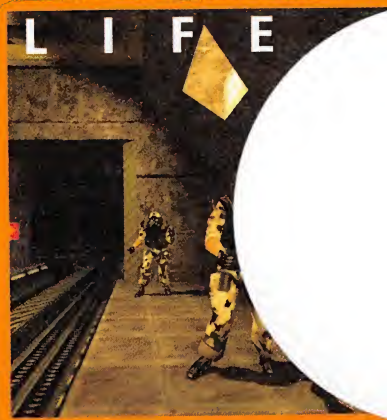


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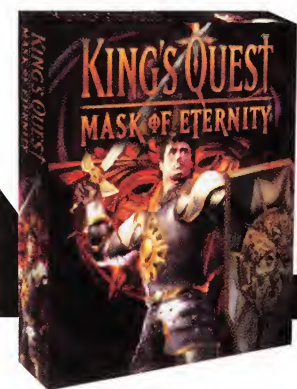
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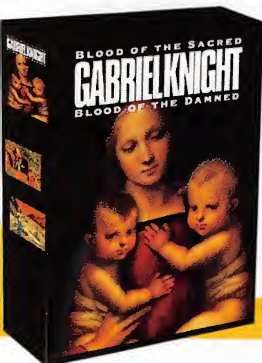
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SIN

'Above Average' is what Sin is, we lament though, as it could have been so much more.

Most of you will have tried the Sin demo by now — heck, the game's been out for a month already so you may have even bought it, or read about it on the 'net. For those of you who've been living on the moon for the last month, our review is for you.

Along with Half-Life and Unreal, Sin has been one of the most eagerly anticipated releases of 1998. Activision here in Australia did a good job building up gamer's expectations of the product, whetting people's appetites with a great demo and their touring Gamer Nights events. Sadly, Activision could find themselves hoisted by their own petard, so to speak, because the final product is a wee bit disappointing.

Xmas capers

But what's much, much worse in my view is the fact that it seems to have been a deliberate tactic to release the game unfinished in order to get it on the shelves for Christmas. When a company releases a product with bugs in it because they're just useless, well that's one thing. When a company hypes a game to the point that Activision has, and then goes and releases it in a substandard form it's pretty damn appalling in my book. It's like Ford releasing their new model Falcon before they've done any wear and safety tests just to beat Holden to the dealerships.

Mutant killers

In case you don't know anything about Sin (where have you been?) the basic premise is that you are playing the character of Blade, the head of the best private protection agency in the city of Freeport. You also have a friend in the form of J.C., a stereotypical computer hacker nerd type who exists mainly as a voice over and helps out behind



the scenes by breaking security codes and other such things. The cause for concern in this adventure is an outfit called Sintek, which happens to be run by a fantastically well endowed young woman named Elexis Sinclair. Elexis is in the business of mutating people into cold blooded killing machines via a drug called U4. And of course your mission is to stop her.

Sin has been built around the Quake 2 engine, but one which has been heavily modified. Whether these modifications were worthwhile or not depends

on your point of view. To the purist action gamer, particularly those who play online, Sin will seem a little sluggish. To be precise, running on a PII300 with a Voodoo Banshee card in 640 X 400 X 16 resolution, Sin runs at around 33 fps compared with Quake 2's 58! In other words almost half the speed, and for what? To be honest I don't know. Sure the explosions are a bit prettier but the architecture doesn't seem to be any more complex, and it definitely can't be the AI

We've all been waiting a long time, and we've all been very excited. Now, we're just a little disappointed (but only a little)





(we'll get to that later) Sin basically runs as slowly as Unreal but doesn't look anywhere near as nice.

Pop-guns

The weapons are pretty standard fare for this genre, with a few unusual twists. A pistol, shotgun and two machine guns fill the first four slots and make up the basic weaponry in the game. Funny thing though, your fists are more effective than any of them! I found that I could take out most enemies with two or three punches while the same

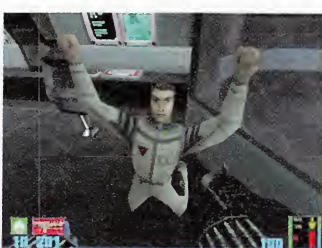
dudes take about twenty machine gun hits to go down. In other words, the first four weapons are next to useless. Along with those are a standard sort of rocket launcher, a couple of energy discharge weapons, grenade launcher and, most interestingly, a spear gun.

The spear gun and your fists will get used a lot more often than you think, a lot of the levels require secrecy and stealth to complete which means keeping quiet. Sin does have some innovative attributes with regards to its mission design with multiple

pathways and a 'cause and effect' structure taking the game away from a totally linear form. Ritual have also put in a few interactive environments as well. Most of you will have had a go at blasting away from that Chopper machine gun at the start of the Sin demo and there are also Forklifts and ATV's to drive around in during the course of the game. The vehicles feel really dinky though, not even as good as those in 3D Realms' Shadow Warrior from two years ago.

Where's the fear?

The feature that really made it obvious that Sin isn't finished, though, is the AI. When I faced Mancini (the first Boss) he stood stock still in a corner of his lair until I killed him. I could have beaten him to death with a bag of fairy floss if I'd wanted to! Compared to Unreal, and even Quake 2, the AI in Sin is rough as guts and the only real challenge from your opponents comes from the fact that health packs are virtually non-existent, as is ammo. In other words, Activision have cheated to make the game harder, instead of finishing the AI they just hid all the health and ammo!



One of the biggest saving graces of Sin, despite all the bugs, is that multiplay absolutely rocks. Love it!

To top it all off the graphical effects in the game haven't been finished either. The most glaringly obvious effect is the water translucency, or rather the complete lack of it. What were they thinking? That's all I can say, what were they thinking?

George Soropos

PLUS+



84%

Category First person shooter
Players 1-multi (IPX, TCP/IP, Modem)
Publisher Activision
Price \$89.95
Rating MA 15+
Available Now

For Multiple pathways through the game, engaging storyline and stable multi-player play, very impressive level design.

Against Sin is essentially unfinished with more work needed on the graphics, AI, code optimisation, loading times, and game-play balancing

Need P166, 32MB RAM, 4xCD, Win 9x

Want PII300, 3D accelerator card

3D SUPPORT

OpenGL, software.

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F16: AGGRESSOR

The Major flies the unfriendly skies with Virgin's attempt at a flight sim, but it's a crash and burn

I've got to admit, right up front, that F16: Aggressor did not take my breath away. It has some nice features, and a story line, but if it's not enjoyable... well, it's just not up there is it?

Mercenary pilots

Aggressor is a game set in the next century. The background to conflict is similar in concept to that of DID's Total Air War where well armed anti-government rebels are attempting to destabilise the region bounded by Madagascar, the Rift Valley, Morocco, and Ethiopia. You act as part of a mercenary force that assists the various governments in putting down the rebels. You do so, within a budget, so you've got to make sure you strike primary and secondary targets to achieve not only mission success, but most importantly, your basic payment and bonuses (blood money!). To those who remember Strike Commander, this will sound very familiar.

You utilise one of the world's leading multi-role aircraft, the F16, to carry out various missions such as deep strike, air reconnaissance, fighter sweep, close air support and interdiction of ground and naval targets. These missions see you and your wingmen targeting rebel F-15s, SU-27s, Cobras, T-80 tanks, APCs, and naval carriers and cruisers.

Decent, but linear

Unfortunately, I found that the game got frustrating when I started the Training Missions. They are linear, which means that you have to complete Training Mission 1 before you can play Training Mission 2. The Training Missions themselves were however quite good, with a

"voice over" that supported text instructions. The linear nature of the game then expanded to the game proper, which contains 40 missions. You've just got to plod along from Mission 1 to 2 to 3 and so on. One saving grace appeared to be the Instant Action function that has plenty of variables, but, as you will see below, the flight and damage models just don't cut it.

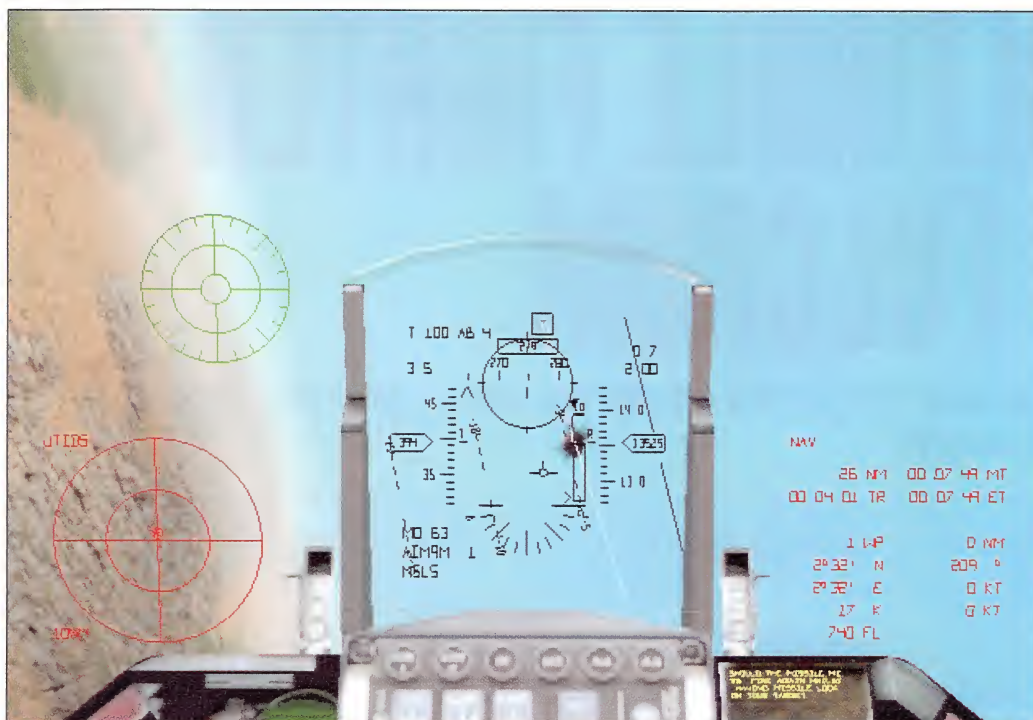


(left) A pleasing innovation is the 'big look' fisheye view

Limited planning

Mission briefings are basic, but thorough. You get the concept of operations, then you've got to write down your primary and secondary objectives. Once completed, you move into the Weapons and Fueling Screen where you can scroll through the characteristics of each weapon before loading it on the airframe. This is a solid concept because it ensures that you select the correct weapons for each of your objectives. It also keeps you focussed on the mercenary side of things because it shows you the cost of each weapon, and your cash balance! Waypoints can be varied, but only by position, so only very limited mission planning can be undertaken.





(left) Bugger the cockpit. This is an 'all HUD' sort of sim. Indicative, that.



PLUS⁺



I found the greatest web site for anyone with a thirst for knowledge on F16s.

http://www.cybercomm.nl/~stp/mlu_3.htm is a site put together by a Canadian on the F-16 Mid Life Upgrade. It covers the whole Upgrade story, and at the bottom of the page you can then select another page that takes you through the F-16's avionics systems. This includes the recent Electronic Intelligence Sensor (ELINT) systems additions to F-16s deployed in some NATO countries, and the new AN/APX-113 Identification Friend or Foe system. Highly recommended reading.

Once on the tarmac, Aggressor starts to look good. The game offers a good number of camera views and you notice that under the wings you can see the actual seeker heads on Mavericks and air to air missiles; very nice. However, sound support is poor. The engine remains at one constant pitch throughout each flight no matter what the throttle setting, with the only

other noises being Bitching Betty, your breathing as you take the Gs, and the sound of other aircraft as they pass close by.

Crap damage model

Aggressor's flight and damage models are also well below par. There was no noticeable difference in flight characteristics, no matter what load I carried, and I could even keep it flying at under 90 knots. I also found it very unresponsive. The damage model was woeful; sure things do go bang, and there's quite a lot of smoke and flame, but rarely do the airframes get damaged. They just fall out of the sky on fire. On the ground it was the same. The ground objects were Tonka Toys that were hit, jumped up a bit, then fell back to earth in an undamaged state; I just had to imagine they were burning! Not on in this day and age.

Nice graphics though

On a positive note, the cockpit graphics were very functional



and at times entertaining. Functional because Aggressor allows you to project all the Multi-Function Displays (MFDs) on your HUD. You therefore don't have to look down unless you are targeting with the LAN-TIRN Pod or similar.

Entertaining, because one of the cockpit views lets you sit back, see the HUD, MFDs and the rest of the cockpit, and at the same time see the pilot's hands mimic your actions on your own throttle and stick.

I suppose by now I've made the game sound very dull? Well if I have, that was my experience. F16: Aggressor failed to make an aggressive pilot out of me.

Maj Ian Lindgren

69%

Category Flight sim
Players 1-TBA
Publisher Virgin Interactive
Price \$TBA
Rating TBA
Available Now

For Detailed "on airframe" graphics. The ability to project MFDs on the HUD is a step towards situational awareness.

Against Linear missions, a poor mission planner, and bad flight and damage models. Not a good day for Virgin Interactive really.

Need P133, 16 MB RAM

Want P166, 32 MB RAM and 3Dfx card.

3D SUPPORT

3Dfx, Glide and D3D.

F16 MULTIROLE FIGHTER & MiG 29 FULCRUM

Two games in one, and for a decent price too - and no Voxel engine either. Top stuff!

Well, this was a surprise; two brand new games in one box, and at a very reasonable price.

Novalogic's newest flight simulations, F16 Multirole Fighter and MiG 29 Fulcrum take a leap forward in technology and gameplay. Out with the Voxel Space 2 graphics engine and in with native 3Dfx under Wing95. Out with below par realism and in with realism levels that fall just short of Jane's simulations. This combination will sell well for Novalogic, and in my opinion is the best value for money on the flight simulation market.

Keyboard overlays

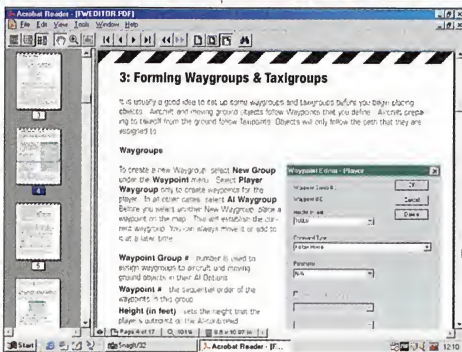
Before I review the game, I want to advise you that you still get the same Novalogic value inside the one box. Two CDs, two manuals and two Keyboard Command Charts; all to the same standard that you received with Comanche Gold. To my delight, there is also a Keyboard Overlay that sits astride the Function Keys to give you quick visual access to the primary warfighting keystrokes. This is something that disappeared from gaming four or more years ago. I hope this heralds its re-emergence.

Both games have been built from the ground up with a focus on two areas; single player flight and Internet play. For the former, Novalogic enlisted the assistance of Lockheed Martin's F-16 Chief Test Pilot, John Fergione to help out with F-16 Multirole Fighter, and Yuri Prikhodko, Russian MiG-29 test pilot/cosmonaut to help out with MiG-29 Fulcrum. For the latter, significant effort has gone into enhancing support to both games in Novalogic's free Integrated Battle Space servers where you can fly with up to 128 other players, but more on this anon.

Each of the sims have very



(above) The F-16 "electric jet" is computer controlled, and won't embarrass bad pilots while (below) the MiG-29 is almost agricultural in design & manufacture, but quite deadly



(Top) The avionics for each aircraft are wildly different. F-16's digital cockpit on the left & MiG-29's on the right

similar interfaces and characteristics, and while they do stand on their own, what I'll do now is comment on their similarities, then the differences, and then finally I'll cover Internet play.

Just like Clint!

The options are worth a mention because of the 27 variables that really allow you to tailor each game to your skill level. For instance, flight characteristics like flat spins and flameouts are produced in both games. These

and a number of other variables, such as Easy Target Cue and Blackouts/Redouts can be checked off until you have sufficient skill to handle the game-play these features bring. One interesting feature in MiG-29 is that you can set Voice Dialogue to

Russian. This means that your wingmen replies, and all verbal communications come across in Russian! Interesting if you speak Russian (or want to be like Clint in Firefox), but not really recommended if you want to maintain the edge!

Detailed briefings

Quick Missions provide 17 canned missions in both games that can be undertaken in any order. This includes a couple of training missions with voice over instructions to get you acquainted, but I must emphasise that Mission Briefings for each of the canned missions are

very very good. They cover the general situation in the theatre (ie, why you are fighting), intelligence for enemy and friendly, a precise statement of your mission, how you will execute it, and who is the air and on the ground with you. Great work, very realistic, and really gets you into the spirit of the game. This extends to Campaign play, and you will need to write down the call-signs of friendlies and codewords for targets or you will

come unstuck when flying.

Waypoints can be varied, but only by position; therefore there can be no synchronisation of flights, differing heights and speeds and so on, so this is limiting. Weapons loadout is basic, but it is very functional because you can see the char-

acteristics of each weapon before loading it; this allows you to be mission focussed and load stores that match your targets.

Mission generator

Thankfully, Novalogic has tacked on a Mission Generator that works externally to the game. A separate .PDF document gives good instruction on its use, and these missions can then be accessed from within the game in Quick Missions. Not bad, but a bit clunky in concept.

The Campaign selection is really a misnomer. In both games it is really a set of 40 canned missions (80 for both games) that must be undertaken sequentially. This is not up to today's standards, however the saving grace is the variable terrain. MiG-29 sees you in the Kurile Islands, Uganda,





Somalia/Ethiopia, Tajikstan and Myanmar (we used to call that Burma, but the country has had a name change!). F-16 sees you in Serbia, Liberia/Sierra Leone, the Congo, Somalia/Ethiopia, and Myanmar. Somalia/Ethiopia and Myanmar are common to both games

because they are used in multi-player games.

Australian content

Based on my study on the current world defence climate, the background to each trouble spot is very credible, and you progress from one area to the next.



Myanmar in particular is worthy of note because it is close to home and you will come across objects such as Forward Operating Base Melbourne! This shows some regional homework by Novalogic; see PLUS for Australia's Strategic Policy which



There is no truth to the rumour that the MiG-29 is built from surplus Trabant spare parts. Probably.



describes how we would operate in defence of regional interests in the Asia Pacific Region; our strategic environment.

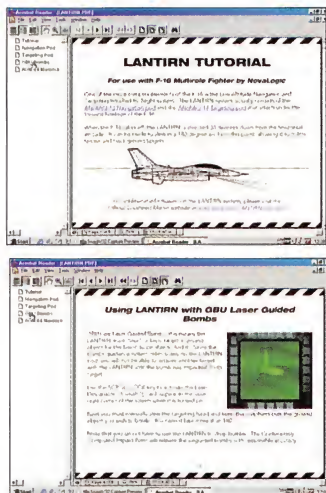
The Flight modelling in both sims takes into account drag, lift and weight. After each weapon release the aircraft becomes more manoeuvrable, and the same can be said as fuel is burned off. One interesting feature is weapons load effects; for example if you fire off one HARM from the left side, the aircraft will roll to the right if another HARM is under the right wing. Very realistic.

Visually, both games are a quite good, beginning with read-

able instruments, mirroring effects on the canopies (something new), missile trails, smoke and explosive effects. The environment is also very busy with all sorts of craft in the water, and F15s, SU27s, Harriers, TU-27s, Apaches, Cobras, HiPs and Hinds in the air!

MiG29

Just briefly I'll touch on some differences in each game and cover MiG-29 first because I really enjoyed this aircraft. It is bigger and heavier than the F-16, and from the first moment in the cockpit you can tell it's "made in Russia!" Not much dig-



No idea what's going on?
The excellent tutorial will fix that!

ital and plenty of analogue! The sound of the twin engines winding up is awesome and the crash into afterburner is jolting. You can really throw it around.

Amraamski, Da?

The other major feature in the MiG is the combination of InfraRed Search and Track system (IRST) and the N-019/RP-29 Pulse Doppler radar that allows you to see out to 148km. Put this with the radar guided AA-12 Adder, sometimes called the "Amraamski", which has the same 148km reach, and the MiG-29 is a real hunter/killer.

F-16

The F-16 has more advanced avionics, and in particular has six



radar modes and a very realistic LANTIRN system. The latter has its own electronic .PDF manual and F-16 uses most of the LANTIRN features for Electro-Optical weapons by lasing targets and slewing the targeting head with the hat switch. Well done.

Novalogic's Battle Space server

Ben challenged me to a duel by Internet, but wimped out at the last moment citing a short notice weekend business trip to South Australia. Nonetheless, I logged on to the Novalogic

Integrated Battle Space server and my 33K modem worked quite nicely. There are a number of different multiplayer game types, the best being one that consists of two sides playing a scenario in which both teams must attack the opposing force's base while

defending their own from attack. Each side is given an AWACS to protect and to provide radar coverage, and the two theatres of play make it interesting and variable. You can do the same on a LAN or locally with up to 16 players...do it, it's fun!

Overall, this combination pack offers great value for money. Not too much realism to shock beginners, and just enough to keep realism freaks happy.

Maj Ian Lindgren

A mean, sexy, dangerous machine
Hot!



Category Flight sims
Players 1 - 16 (LAN/Internet), and up to 128 through Novaworld.
Publisher Novalogic.
Price \$69.95.
Rating TBA
Available Now

For Great value for money. A good level of realism, a realistic flight model, detailed briefings, and integration with up to 128 other players in Novaworld.

Against Canned missions. Little ability to alter waypoints.

Need P166, 32 MB RAM

Want P200, 32 MB RAM and 3Dfx card

3D SUPPORT

3Dfx, Glide and D3D.

PLUS⁺

Australia's Strategic Policy

Why not take advantage of the Adobe Acrobat PDF viewer on the CD? I said that the cover stories for each of the Campaign areas are realistic, and in particular the Myanmar hot spot brings things close to home. Go to <http://www.dod.gov.au/minister/sr97/welcome.html> and click on Australia's Strategic Policy Report. A small 467K file to download. Read this and find out why Australia is so interested in the security of the Asia Pacific Region and what priorities are being placed on your Defence dollar to support the national interests of Australia.

MONACO GRAND PRIX

Racing Simulation 2

Those wacky French funsters are back with a sequel to the disappointing F1 Racing Sim

Of course, we've all seen this before. You know that bit on Channel Nine's Formula One coverage where "Big Dazza" and "AJ" talk us through a computer simulation of a lap around that weekend's particular circuit? Well, that's Monaco Grand Prix. Or rather, it's actually UbiSoft's Formula One Racing Simulation, which, you see, is the other place where we've seen this before.

Please explain?

Right, let me explain. The straightforward version is that Monaco Grand Prix is simply the sequel to F1RS. No problem there, you would think. Except that it's barely been nine months since F1RS was first released. Surely, even in these sequel-heavy days where the dominant credo is replicate or die, that's not nearly long enough. What could UbiSoft have possibly come up with in such a short space of time that was new and worthy of a sequel? The confusing answer is both plenty and nothing at the same time.

The same flaws

The original game's driving model has been transferred virtually intact, save for some subtle tinkering around the edges that only someone who played it religiously would notice. Thus, it still remains an uncomfortable mixture of simulation realism and arcade accessibility. The problem I have here is that it feels unsuitable for either a quick spin when you have that "need for speed" (thanks, EA) or as a game into which it would be worth investing a large amount of time. Sadly, it appears that UbiSoft's noble intention of trying to appeal to all kinds of gamers has only resulted in too many compromises being made.

Play on the Easy mode and you'll be gnashing your teeth in frustration as the auto-braking system kicks in 50-100 metres too early yet again and the other cars zoom past. Switch to the so-called Realistic mode and you'll soon be bemoaning the idiosyncrasies of a driving model that quite inelegantly simulates handling and still (still!) sends you on identical 270 degree spins when you make all manner of errors. I should mention, though, that the latter are slightly more flexible than they were in the first game, in that there is some (but not much) hope here of correcting before it's too late.

Pretend cars

Visually and aurally, too, this is the same game, right down to the excellent smoke and dust effects and exceptionally poor engine noise that tends towards a wheeze instead of a roar. The



cars are impressively detailed, yet entirely fictional since UbiSoft decided not to negotiate a license with FIA for use of the real F1 cars and drivers. On the other hand, the circuits look great and fly past with a bare minimum of slow-down on my P200 plus 3Dfx (with all detail on and loads of cars on screen). Also, there's a fine selection of playable views (though the cockpit display has fallen behind the



Just for variety, there's also GP racing from the heady 1950's. Where did they get the idea for that, we wonder?

state-of-the-art set by Johnny Herbert's GP and GP Legends) and some cool-looking, but bewildering external camera views to enjoy when you've crashed out of the race.

Plentiful options

Race options are plentiful. Joining the obligatory Practice,



Single Race and Season are a superb array of gameplay-extending modes to explore. Time Attack lets you race on any track against a "ghost car" of your best lap. Career throws you into life as a novice driver in a lowly team

PLUS+

MONACO
RACING SIMULATION 2

Home

Keep an eye on www.monacoracing.com for news of that much needed patch.

and you have to impress enough people to get offered a better deal in a better team over successive seasons. Perhaps the most interesting is the Scenario mode. For experts only, here you have to drive a specific car and achieve a specific result - as the second driver in your team you have to help your teammate to the victory that would ensure him the championship, for example. In a welcome addition to the main modern day fare, however, there is the secondary option of racing in the Formula One cars of the 1950s. If

you like, these guys are legends even for Grand Prix Legends. Don't get too excited, though, this isn't really an alternative to Sierra's astonishing sim. Rather, you should view it as more of an extra bonus on top of an already decent game, if only because the season and career modes are absent here. Shame.

Beware the bugs

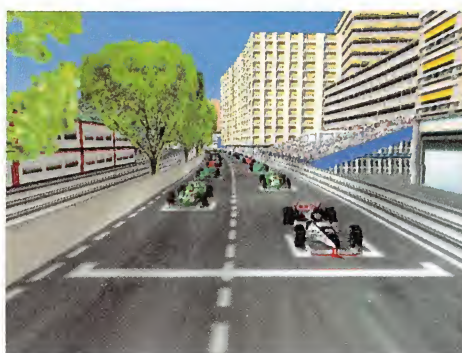
Without doubt the most ridiculous aspect of Monaco GP is the curious little bug that disables nearly every menu in the game. When you hit pause during a race, a menu appears listing typical options such as Resume, Restart, and Quit. The (not so) funny part is that the keys to move up and down this list don't work, so the high-



light is forever stuck on the top one. End result: you cannot restart or quit a race without using Ctrl-Alt-Del to shut down the whole program. Worse, when you choose the Career mode, it opens with a similarly disabled menu that only lets you select the option to view the lap times. End result: the entire Career mode is unplayable. UbiSoft, patch this immediately!

Monaco Grand Prix is definitely more of an evolution of the original F1RS than a groundbreaking sequel. I'm not convinced there's enough new here to attract previous owners, but anyone daunted by the prospect of a more hardcore Formula One sim should give this a chance.

David Wildgoose



Just like F1GP, the game is amazingly pretty. Just like F1GP, the driving model leaves a lot to be desired

74%

Category Racing
Players 1-Multi (Splitscreen, Network)
Publisher UbiSoft
Price \$TBA
Rating G
Available Now

For Well presented with loads of options, most of which will prove worthwhile investigating. Lovely graphics, too. Scenarios are a cool idea and the chance to drive those early F1 cars shouldn't be passed up.

Against The idiosyncratic driving model won't please everyone. Engine noise sucks and that's probably a literal description, I might add. The menu bug. Bear in mind that this is nearly the same game that was released earlier this year.

Need P133, 24MB RAM, 4xCD, 4MB 3D card

Want P200, 32MB RAM, Joystick or Steering wheel

3D SUPPORT

Direct3D, 3Dfx supported

KNIGHTS & MERCHANTS

Taking a leaf from the Settlers book, this underhyped German management game has the goods



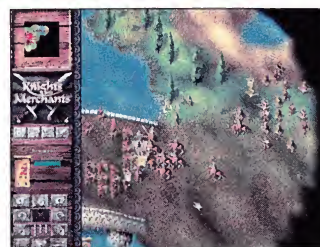
You know you've been playing too many "resource-management-empire-building-and-fighting-with-little-blokes" games when; 1) You close your eyes and realise you have the woodcutter graphic imprinted on your retina; 2) To the startled reaction from total strangers, you cry out "Into battle!" at completely inappropriate moments during the day; and 3) It's the day before deadline and you still haven't written that Knights & Merchants review. Blame Caesar 3 because - much to my anguish - I've become addicted to these damned things again.

Interactive Magic, via German developers Joymania, have uncovered a small gem in Knights & Merchants. It's rather uncomfortably (or comfortably, depending on your point of view) reminiscent of The Settlers, but you should not dismiss it as merely more of the same (although, to be honest, it is merely more of the same). However, much like the aforementioned Caesar 3, Knights

has that more of the same panache sufficient to rekindle your flagging interest and can boast just enough noteworthy fresh ideas to captivate anew.

Build the society up...

Your mission commences in fairly familiar territory with a useful tutorial to teach the basics of village construction. A storehouse forms the hub of your community, housing as it does all the essential resources (wood, food, stone, weapons, etc). The structure tree is typical - a schoolhouse is needed to train all your workers, followed by an inn, quarry, woodcutter's, sawmill, several farms, a vineyard, piggery, and so on. It's also typically inflexible - meaning that the start of every mission can feel pretty repetitive as you rebuild all the same structures over again and in virtually the same order. Of course, building placement is important in that, for example, your tannery ought to be near the armour workshop to ensure a ready supply of pigskin. Food distribution is handled in a manner superior to many similar titles.



It can become a little repetitive at the start of each mission, but there's more than enough micro management to keep you happy

their condition away from the barracks. Again, it's the poor serfs who have to do all the legwork.

...fine-tune it...

Beyond the standard resource management fare, there is a whole host of neat features that add so much to the gameplay. Perhaps the easiest to underestimate is the option to adjust the allocation of goods throughout your village. With the smallest effort you can inform those tireless serfs to bias their delivery of corn, say, to the stables at the expense of





Not only a great little management sim, the combat element of Knights and Merchants is really well done too



include several combat-only sorties where your tactical nous comes to the fore, while there are plenty of the traditional town-planning exercises as well, naturally.



...then destroy someone else's!

One of Knights' best features is the combat. There are nine different troop types, ranging from wimpy militia to sword fighters, crossbowmen and lance carriers. They all have their own strengths and weaknesses that for once actually make a noticeable difference on the battlefield. Send your cavalry straight for the enemy's archers, then get them to double back and attack their axe fighters from the rear. Squads (ie. a group of two or more troops - I've had more than thirty together at various stages) are assigned a formation to assist you in commanding them in the heat of combat. The only problem I have here is that they don't automatically regroup into their formation after being fed by the serfs - you'll be ordering them to "Fall in!" quite a bit.

the swine farm and mill. The missions, too, are well-designed, lengthy and most will require several attempts to complete (even the early ones). A nice balance has been struck between elongated wars of attrition and tense, torrid battles. Opening in splendidly arresting fashion, the very first mission actually begins halfway through a battle! Your initial task is to repair the damage and swiftly prepare for a counter-attack. Later missions

Using the available terrain is of vital importance. The landscape is depicted in pseudo-3D and is full of hills, ridges, cliffs, trees and bridges. Height offers a distinct advantage, especially to your archers. You'll need to quickly identify the best positions to place your troops for the fortification of your village. A good starting point would be to have your archers lining the clifftops, foot soldiers blocking off the pass, and cavalry waiting in the wings to outflank the enemy. Combat is thus far more tactical than it usually is in some lesser real-time strategy click-fests.

Awww, how cute

Knights is also a much cuter game than its rivals. Every incident is painstakingly detailed - from the animation of each worker going about their daily duties (I love the winemaker sloshing around in his barrel of grapes, the coalminer lowering himself by pulley into the dark depths and, of course, the butcher having a smoke on his little balcony) to the constantly changing environment (as trees are replanted, mountains are mined and the ground levelled for each new construction). In fact, much of the pleasure of playing this kind of game is derived from sitting back and marvelling at what you've created; of which I was doing plenty.

David Wildgoose



PLUS+

Knights & Merchants

The official Knights & Merchants site
<http://www.imagicgames.com/knights/>

81%

Category Strategy
Players 1-6 (Network, etc)
Publisher Interactive Magic
Price \$TBA
Rating TBA
Available Now

For Hey, I really like this! Knights is an addictive and very playable addition to a well-worn genre. Thankfully, it offers just enough of its own to make it a worthwhile distraction.

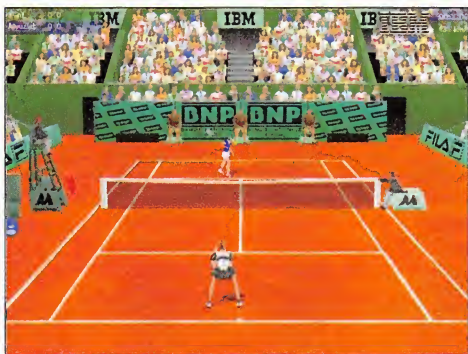
Against Not quite as strategically satisfying as Caesar 3, but a good little game nonetheless. The only real pain is feeding those rather-too-easily disorganised troops!

Need P133, 24MB RAM, 4xCD

Want P166, 32MB RAM

ROLAND GARROS - The Paris French Open 1998

Tennis sims are, finally, getting better. All that's needed now is some racket abuse and a supermodel in the stands



Rather than a complicated control system, there's only two 'action' buttons, but strangely enough it works quite well

tennis has been an ace that those few developers have failed to pull off.

More bad puns
Microfolie's haven't exactly

Tennis is one sports sim that most developers wouldn't touch with a twenty foot pole. Have you ever seen an EA Sports Tennis 99 sitting on the shelves? Or a VR Sports Davis Cup 99? It's not because the game isn't popular (it's huge) nor because gamers don't accept the concept of a tennis sim on the PC. It's because tennis is one buggery hard sport to bring to the PC. Most efforts in the past have been shonky and often forgettable. You may be thinking "Hang on! Tennis is but a more colourful version of Pong, and that was a game I was playing 15 years ago! Is Pong really the last frontier of the programming world?". Sure, you could look at tennis as an advanced version of Pong, but to many it's so much more. And to capture the whole experience that is grand-slam

slammed us with an ace regarding Roland Garros - French Open 1998, but they have served up a damn good tennis title. While many argue that graphics and features play a major role in games such as these, a tennis game will only be as good as the system used to control the players and the ball. So when you find that there are only two buttons used in this game, initial thoughts may lean towards that of disappointment and, in some of you, shock horror. There's the topspin button (button A) and the slice button (button B). The



other controls are simply left and right, and up and down - no run button, no dive button. And yet after a short stint at getting a feel for the game, you find that these keys are more than an enough to allow a great game of tennis (and for you diving nuts - you do actually dive in the game). This is because there's a whole myriad of things that you can do with these keys. While initially it's completely mystifying (the manual doesn't really help much at all), and the learning curve is quite steep, it all eventually falls into place and starts to make sense. The end result is a fantastic way of controlling the game.

Ways to play

A quality control system. Check. What about the features? French Open offers your standard exhibition and competition styles of play. You can take a slash at doubles, as well as taking on a friend via an IPX network setup. There are four different court types to play on, including clay, grass, artificial and cement, and surprisingly these actually offer differing playing conditions. The graphics are crisp and the motion captured players actually move like real-life players would move on the court. Thank the makers for the 3D accelerator here.

PLUS+

Tennis

Rules of Tennis

• The Code of Tennis

ATP Rankings

• ATP Singles Rankings Top 300 (and results)

• ATP Doubles Rankings

WTA Rankings

• WTA Singles Rankings Top 200

• WTA Doubles Rankings Top 50

Male Player's Pages:

• ATP Players Country

<http://club.eng.cam.ac.uk/~mz101/tennis.html> For the rules of tennis and links to fan pages!

But we want a sim with realistic physics that's actually fun to play too! Well, French Open 1998 doesn't bring any of the glamour and drama of grand-slam tennis to the humble PC, which is a pity as the game is so much more enjoyable with a bit of personality. Ah well, we can't always get what we want - and what Microfolie's have already given us with French Open 1998 is more than enough.

March Stepnik



85%

Category Sports
Players 1-2 (IPX)
Publisher Microfolie's
Price \$TBA
Rating G
Available Now

For Visually pleasing game of tennis that actually plays well too!

Against No real player names, and a lack of 4 player multi-player support lets this game down.

Need P133, Win 9x

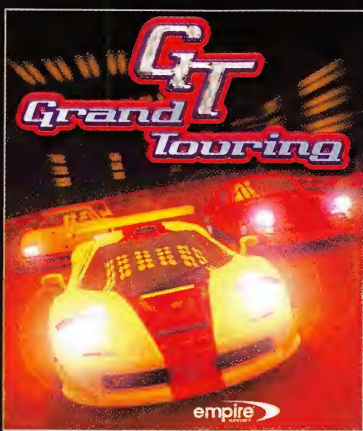
Want P200, 32MB RAM, 3D accelerator

3D SUPPORT

Direct 3D is supported

GT Grand Touring

Get set to burn rubber with the fastest, most challenging super-racer available on PC CD-Rom. Grand Touring's unique AI system pits you against real, thinking opponents in this arcade-quality motor-racing sim. With the fastest PC graphics technology on the planet, Grand Touring is the ultimate mix of motor-racing intelligence and adrenaline.



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THE SMARTEST OPPONENTS

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(8 YEARS & OVER)
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ODDWORLD: Abe's Exoddus

Farting, slapping, waving and sneaking, Abe's back with a vengeance



Don't let the (very) cute graphics fool you, the puzzles are really quite difficult and challenging. This is not only for the kiddies.

PLUS+

Chatting, farting, and slapping

The game employs a unique

communication system that allows Abe to converse with and issue orders to fellow Mudokons. Abe is also capable of accomplishing similar feats when controlling possessed Scrabs, Sliggs, Paramites and Glukkons. Negotiation and diplomacy also come into the picture as many Mudokons display a wide range of emotions that affect how cooperative they are. These features combine to give the player the impression of immersion in a living, breathing world rather than a static game environment.

Overall, Oddworld: Abe's Exodus is an enjoyable and highly addictive game that will delight young children and enthrall older gamers. Requiring lateral thinking as well as lightning fast reflexes, it provides a rare challenge that will keep players coming back for more.

Brett Robinson

New gameplay elements

Retaining many of the gameplay elements of the original, Abe's Exoddus introduces several innovative features while maintaining an element of familiarity. Abe is one versatile Mudokon, and his abilities have been further enhanced to add whole new elements to the gameplay, but they need to be. Not only is he dealing with more enemies, but his fellow Mudokons display more characteristics too, like being blind, sick, sad, angry, and even overdosing on laughing gas (which requires a slap to shut them up). Many of Oddworld's inhabitants are savage creatures bent on eating anything that crosses their paths. Unfortunately, Mudokons are peaceful creatures who are largely defenceless against such threats. They do, however, have the ability to possess their foes and force them to do their bidding. This opens up a whole world of possibilities as it allows for infiltration of normally inaccessible areas, and enables Abe to use the weapons at his enemies' disposal against them.



In September of 1997, Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee renewed consumer interest in a dying genre pioneered by console classics like Another World and Flashback. Its quirky humour, cutting-edge graphics and cinematic cut scenes won over jaded gamers looking for more than just a run-of-the-mill platformer. As a result the game's Mudokon protagonist, Abe, now enjoys something of a cult following; an aspect that will practically guarantee high future sales.

Bones for brew

After rescuing his species from the brink of extinction, Abe is forced to once again face his nemeses; the Glukkons. The aforementioned bad guys begin selling a highly addictive beverage called SoulStorm whose main ingredient is Mudokon bones and the tears of Abe's compatriots. Rather than go to all the trouble of rounding up live Mudokons, the Glukkons raid the ancient Mudokon burial grounds and, in doing so, condemn Abe's ancestors to an afterlife of eternal restlessness (not to mention fragmentation). Once again Abe takes the initiative and sets off on another quest to not only save his ancestors, but free his peers who have been enslaved in the Soul Storm factory.



<http://www.oddworld.com>
The latest news on the Oddworld series. Includes info on Abe's Exoddus' Academy Award nomination(!) and some hilarious sound bites.

86%

Category Adventure
Players 1
Publisher GT Interactive
Price \$TBA
Rating M15+
Available Now

For Addictive gameplay, stunning cut scenes and, of course, Abe

Against In many ways, Abe's Exoddus is similar to its predecessor

Need P166, 16MB Ram, 4xCD

Want P200, 32MB RAM, 8xCD

WarBirds

DAWN OF ACES

WORLDWIDE MEGAPLAYER GAMING

iMAGIC  online

Introduces an air combat
simulation that takes pilots
back to the days of
honour and
courage.

Jump into the open cockpit of planes made
of plywood, aluminium, and fabric...

Pull down your goggles...

...and fly like legendary aces.



This title is yet to be classified.

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ACTUA TENNIS

No Anna Kournikova, but even so, Actua Tennis aces the opposition

Well, this one takes me back to the good old days when I wore the whites for Queen and country. Of course in those days we had no corporate sponsorships or million dollar contracts and I had to play with an old cricket bat in a borrowed raincoat but by God they were good times. Back in those days it wasn't unheard of to go through three or four umpires a game. You see the crowd were allowed to drink as much as they could and they were pretty keen on taking their firearms with them as well. Sadly, it's a different game now.

No Brooke Shields!

Now it's a lot more like this Actua Tennis simulation from Gremlin. Now what, you may ask yourself, do Tennis fans look for in a Tennis simulation? Realism, swearing at the Umpire and having an ex model or actress in the crowd waiting to jump you as soon as you get off the court. Actua Tennis gives you one of these things, realism, but in an easily accessible fun sort of way. To be fair I haven't played any Tennis games that had a real simulation feel to them, largely I think because of the control method always used in these types of games.

Too limited

There are two shot possibilities in Actua Tennis, the lob and volley, with the type of shot determined by your relative position to the ball. In other words, you position yourself near the ball and hit the shot button, and maybe a directional nudge with your joystick or

pad to aim your shot. This kind of interface is fantastic for beginners and casual players who just want to knock off a quick set but for those of you in for the long haul, it does start to pale after a while as the gameplay becomes a bit repetitive.

A bit more difficulty in the stroke-play, say by adding control over the strength of your shot, would have given it more long term appeal to the serious Tennis sim freak, and some more character and personality in the other players wouldn't go astray either. How about some abuse of the umpire? Some racket tossing? Hey, some mud slinging or complimentary comments from the crowd would have been cool too.

No Anna!

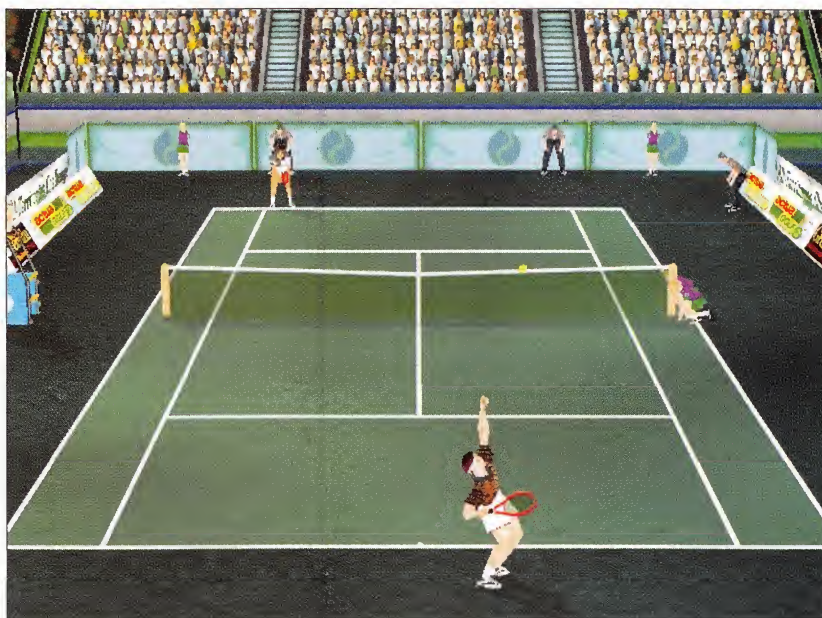
Fans of all the big male tennis stars will enjoy playing as their hero but as usual the Ladies have been left out with no attempt to use any big names from that side of the sport. I'm sure there would have been some marketing potential in say Anna Kournikova for the game? And I'm equally sure that a lot of you would have liked to play as Anna just so you could make

those little skirts flap around revealingly - admit it! But I suppose Gremlin have to work to a budget and as we all know babes are not cheap, to have or to keep.

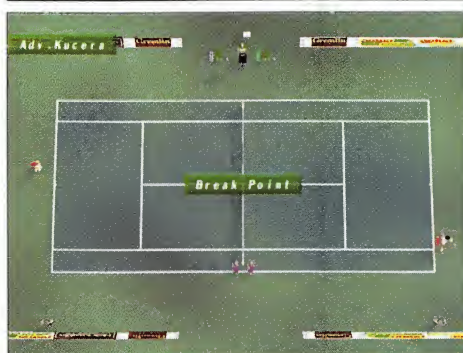
Crippled Cash commentates

As with all Tennis games the graphical grunt required to play Actua Tennis is pretty low so you won't need a beast PC to play, not even an accelerator card. The audio in the game is pretty good too with Cashy's commentary coming up well and a nice welling stadium sound from the crowd. A nice little Tennis sim for those who feel that stepping into the shoes of Rafter or Sampras is something that they'd like to do.

George Soropos



Gee, Pong has come such a long way over the years...



84%

Category Sports sim
Players 1-Multi
Publisher Gremlin
Price \$TBA
Rating G
Available Now

For Quick learning curve and intuitive playing style, and an aussie commentator in the form of Pat Cash

Against For real sim freaks the learning curve is probably too quick, gameplay lacks a bit of depth.

Need P133, 16MB RAM, 4X CD, Win 9x

Want P200, 32MB RAM, 3D accelerator

3D SUPPORT

D3D only



MADDEN NFL 99

An American Football sim from the maestros at EA Sports? You'd be Madden not to try it...

American Football has yet to really take off on our shores. Sure, there are a few local leagues scattered about here and there, and those of us blessed with cable TV might have taken in a game or two, but you'd be hard pressed to find one person out of a hundred that knew what a post slant was, and you'd be met by blank stares if you asked who won last year's Superbowl. Despite this lack of interest, Gridiron is well suited to a game simulation whether you know the rules or not, and as per usual EA Sports have been at the forefront of Gridiron simulations throughout the past few years, though there has been some stiff competition from rival developers.

Digitised thuggery

As we've come to expect, the usual EA slickness is in place. The motion capture is great, and the players move with very impressive fluidity. A few stand-out examples are where the players will stumble then continue on if a defender dives and clips them on an ankle, or if a defender catches an attacker front on then you won't just see a regulation tackle - these guys are out to hurt. It really made me wince to watch, such was the degree of realism in the player movement. As with all the other sims in EA's '99 series, players are of different heights and their heads will swivel to watch the ball too, which is a nice touch.

Technicalities explained

Now, I've reviewed and played Gridiron sims before, and I've always felt more than a little confused because of the technical nature of the game. It's not the kind of thing that you can just pick up and play for a long period of time, usually. The actual running and



passing game seems rather simple, but the technical details of which play to call, when to call it, what defensive action you should take and so on has always been a bit of a mystery for me and, I suspect, many others too. Thankfully, Madden 99 (as with the last instalment) comes with a companion CD where the different types of plays, the defensive formations, and even the history and details of each and every NFL team are explained in FMV. There could have been a bit more detail for those not at all familiar with the game, but it suffices to give novices an introduction to the tenets.

Armchair gaming

And so to the gameplay, then. For both novices and experienced armchair coaches alike, Madden 99 should have what you want. There's three different levels of difficulty (pro, all-pro, and Madden), and the option for playing arcade style or properly. For game modes, you've got enough to keep even the most fanatic fan happy, with exhibition matches, seasons, customised seasons, franchises, tournaments, practice, as well as a draft mode to make the team you've always wanted. Once you hit the field Madden 99 is done well enough not to

exclude the novice player, though it's complex enough to keep a veteran happy too. Plays are selected and then run by rote, though you can take control at any time and change the play if you so decide. It's a bit weird just sitting there and watching what happens, but you can always jump in and make your own choices if you want.

As with all sports sims what it really comes down to is that it will more than satisfy a Gridiron fan, as it's definitely the best I've seen so far, and there's plenty to learn and enjoy for those that aren't all that familiar with the code too. No matter how many times it happens, throwing a perfect spiralling piece of pigskin to the fast guy out wide who then runs for 90 yards and does a funky TD dance is just fantastic. Love it!

Gareth Jones



EA come up trumps again with yet another top quality sports sim

88%

Category Gridiron Sim
Players 1-4 (Modem, IPX, TCP/IP, serial)
Publisher EA Sports
Price \$?
Rating G
Available Now

For Sparse commentary, real players, introductory services for novices. It's easy to control, yet difficult to master, and fun to play no matter what stage you're at.

Against High system reqs, and a little more introductory detail would have been nice for non-Americans.

Need P166 (P200MMX without 3D card), 4MB Direct 3D accelerator card, 32MB RAM, 8xCD

Want P2 300, 64MB RAM, 24xCD, 12MB Voodoo2, 8 Button Gamepad

3D SUPPORT

Both Direct3D and Glide are supported, but Direct3D seems to run a lot faster. Go figure...

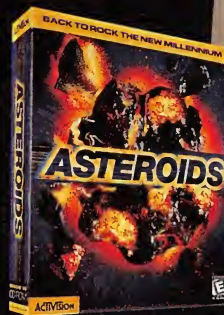
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NHRA DRAG RACING

No, really, there are now two drag racing sims out there. Who would have thought?

The sport is called Drag Racing. The people that pilot the vehicles are either called Dragsters, or Funny Car Drivers. Millions upon millions of people around the world flock regularly to massive arenas to watch two funny-looking cars race a quarter mile (1,320 feet). The actual race is over in a matter of seconds.

Cheating death

There was once a time when we would have been rather surprised to see a bunch of developers get together and decide to make a simulation of a sport such as this. Stranger things have happened, but when you think about it, there's really

doesn't seem to be that much potential in a drag racing title. You pick your car, tune it up a bit (where applicable), and hoon down a short STRAIGHT for a few seconds. What's more - you've got an entire lane to yourself! Yes racing game enthusiasts - you may be wondering where the true racing challenge lies. In reality, dragsters reach speeds in excess of 300mph, and any wrong move can spell the end of the race and even death. Speed and danger is what makes the sport so appealing - the real challenge is to finish the race. The question with NHRA Drag Racing is not so much whether it can pull off all the intricacies that make this sport unique, but whether or not it manages to capture the sport's appeal effectively.

Frilly bits

That said, NHRA Drag Racing is a very slick production. First of all it holds the National Hot Rods Association's seal of approval (a license). So you've got all the frilly bits (logos, sponsors, race tracks, etc) that gives simulations like these that much needed sense of

authenticity. You've got testing, single match, and season play modes to choose from. Season mode also puts prize money into the picture, so you've got the added challenge of needing to keep the coffers full enough (by winning) to avoid having to retire from competition. NHRA commentator John Force (who has that smooth, uniquely American, made for TV, "I spoke like this from the age of 4 years" commentat-



It's much more than just a 'hit the accelerator and wait for a little while' scenario. We're talking about some serious anality



ing style) assaults the ears in this one too. To round it all off, you've also got real Dragster and Funny Car racers worked into the title as opponents.

Accelerate. Pray. Brake.

Which brings us to the racing part. Tantrum (the developers) have really fleshed out the drag racing procedures to ensure a game with a little more depth. Those expecting the game not go further than a "hit gas and fly down the straight, let go when you hit the finish line" affair are quite mistaken. NHRADR requires almost the whole real-life shebang, sans the copious amount of the liquid gold stuff. Once on the track, you need to roll forward into a water box and spin your tires out (which increases tyre traction). After you've done this, you need to roll back and to the starting

line and prepare for the race proper to begin. While this sounds simple, it's actually quite difficult to pull off. Once past the finish line, you also have to make sure you come to a complete stop in safety (again, not an easy thing to do). To compensate this, there are three skill levels to choose from. The first, Novice, takes you straight to the starting line ready for the race. Arcade mode requires the pre-race procedures, while the Full Pass skill level also includes the ability to tune up your car (which is what the true racing nuts should go for, if wanting a more complete drag racing experience).

Okay. So the actual race is a completely anal affair. You race down the stretch, occasionally adjusting the steering wheel, and then pull up. In any mode other than Full

Pass Season, damaging your car has little to no effect. Without that sense of danger, NHRA comes across lacking.

March Stepnik

68%

Category Racing
Players 1
Publisher Gremlin Interactive
Price \$TBA
Rating G
Available Now

For Finally! Another drag racing game! Plenty of options for those with a knowledge of the sport

Against No multiplayer support! The 3D engine has the habit of dropping textures on you without a high end PC.

Need P133, Win 9x, 3D accelerator

Want P233, 64MB RAM

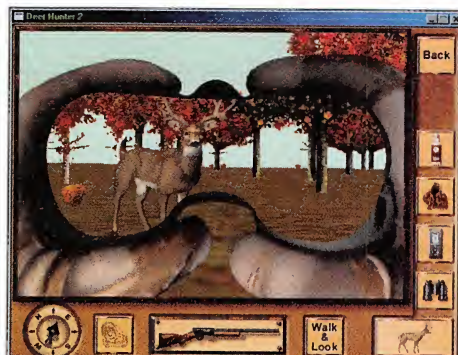
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DEER HUNTER 2

You don't need to be inbred to enjoy it, but it sure helps!



A while back some good 'ol boys at Wizard Works decided that us huntin' types needed a game to keep us busy durin' the off season. An' you know what? It dang went an' sold 'bout 11 million copies in the U.S. alone! Why? Heck none of you pussy foot gamers went out an' bought it. Just us good 'ol huntin' boys, and all those office workin' stiffies who wish they were good 'ol huntin' boys. So in the process they discovered that there's a whole new market out there for simple folk like me an' mah cousin Virgil, folk who don't take kindly to games that need no high school education to figure out, no sir.

Now with this here virtual huntin' you don't have to worry 'bout ammo, or 'bout cleaning yer gun or nothin'. This great sequel to the original Deer Hunter has got it all! Twelve new killin' zones in Pennsylvania, Michigan, Washington Mountain and Georgia (that's three in each) as well as a whole sack full of new tricks to bring those deer right to yer door.

Outwitting animals

Doe Estrus (nah, it's not the name of one of those super models it's what them Does

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<http://www.rodharrison.com/deerpage.htm>

spray around when they're feelin' a bit frisky). Buck Urine, now that is the name of one of those super models but it's also what we call deer piss! Deer Decoys are recommended fer bow hunting, the decoy is a mite cumbersome, but will really pull in the bucks once they

see it. And the GPS is one o' them sat-e-lite contraptions to show yer position, direction, time of day, elevation and even plots your path and waypoints!

Then there's the Scent Dripper. Use it near a scrape to keep it fresh, or near a decoy. The Camo Fleece Jacket will keep you outa sight, and seeing as the larger bucks are especially good at detecting hunters, this may put the odds in your favour. There's also this nifty Tree Stand which gives you a damn good sight and disguise advantage, but it's bulky and takes up two spots in yer in-ventry.

Lotsa guns

Now if n y'all are goin' to go huntin' the most important thing you're gonna need, apart from a case of bourbon and enough gas for the fire, is a gun. Haw, it's even better if n you've got lots of guns, then you don't

have to stop as often to reload. Of course, Deer Hunter 2 has got lots of guns you never saw in the earlier version. There's a 12 gauge semiautomatic shotgun with rifled slugs, a 12 gauge pump shotgun, Bolt action .30-06 with scope, lever action .243, longbow, compound bow, cross-bow with scope, black powder muzzle loader (haw) and a .44-mag revolver with scope (shootin' deer with a handgun? That's a real skill!)

A sobering tale

'Acourse the other good thang ah didn't mention 'bout virtual huntin' is that you can get tanked up to the Godanged eyeballs without havin' to worry 'bout drahvin' yer 'ol pickup truck home along those icy mountain roads. Why once

me an Zack's young 'un, Zack Jnr., rolled mah other pickup down into a ravine the other sahd of Meat Lover's Mountain. We walked all the way home, me with a broken pelvis, hip and two ribs and Zack, Zack was a Godamn mess! But heck we were so pickled we didn't feel a Godamn thing. In fact I wouldn't tell anyone to drive no other way. Can y'all imagine how much that would'a hurt if we'd a bin sober? Godamn.

George Soropos



55%

Category Redneck sim
Players 1
Publisher GT Interactive
Price \$29.95
Rating M
Available Now

For More realistic 3D graphics and improved sound immerse you in the hunting experience a bit more effectively than the original game.

Against Deer don't shoot back! And beer not included.

Need P90, Win95, 8MB RAM

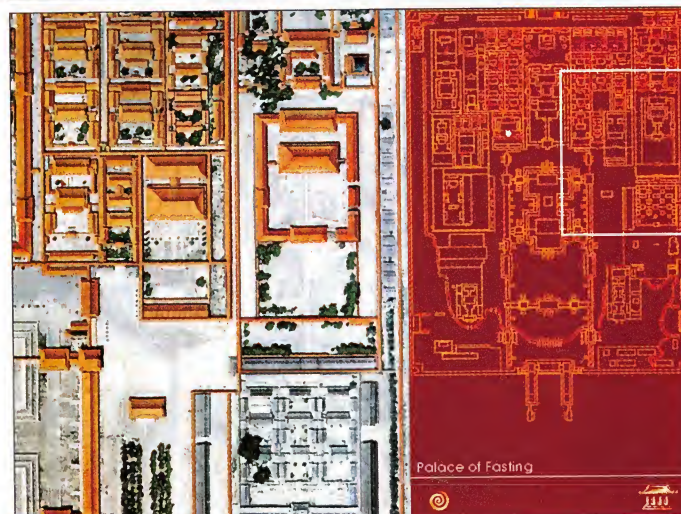
Want P133, 3D accelerator, 16MB RAM

3D SUPPORT

D3D only

FORBIDDEN CITY

Melding learning with adventure, Cryo hit the mark with this adventure tour of 18th century China



Just as much an interactive journey as it is a game, you'll have to very careful or else you'll learn something

The year is 1775 and you are Emperor Qianlong's Second Superintendent of the Imperial Household. Your name is Anjing and you are talking to your former teacher about days gone by when a guard bursts into the room declaring that Wang, the Head Eunuch to the Emperor has been murdered on the steps in the Hall of Supreme Harmony. After speaking with the Emperor, you are informed that you have until sunset to find Wang's killer and bring him to justice. If you don't find the murderer by nightfall then you shall be dismissed and thrown out of the Forbidden City, shamed into never returning again.

Eunuchs and concubines

The thing that makes Forbidden City a great game right from the start is the beautiful and indepth storyline that is woven through the gameplay. Taking in all the details of the Chinese dynasty, you as the player are guided on a tour of eighteenth century China that would make a history professor proud. With a unique game interface, you can learn about everything from something as simple as a vase to the ornate cherry wood furniture that adorns the temples. If you see an item that you'd like to know more about then simply go to the reference section to be given a textbook look at what you have selected, presented as an encyclopedia styled article giving

great depth to the subject. The character interaction is naturally where most of the storyline comes from and with over thirty characters to chew the fat with there's just enough to keep things interesting - but with a few more it would have been better. The characters are presented in a nice way with each one having their own motion captured face, this is great because it doesn't give you the feeling that you've talked to someone before. It actually gets a bit funny later in the story when you first meet the Emperor, as his face has a definite Anglo Saxon look to it. If you've ever seen Peter Ustinov as Charlie Chan then you'll know what I mean.

Take a tour

The game itself is viewed from the first person perspective which seems to be the norm for a 3D adventure. Once you do start exploring it is vital to know where your maps are and how they work. It may only be a small thing but if you don't look at any maps you'll be lost in this immense game within minutes. Out of the whole game, it was the ability to be able to travel anywhere in the enormous Forbidden City that impressed me the most. It's just really great to wander about checking out the sights of a foreign city.

More talkie please

The main thing that could have been improved upon is the limited amount of characters. A busy market place would have been nice or maybe even the odd tavern here and there, for the lack of conversation is enough to drive you batty. With such a big emphasis being placed on the look and learn aspect of the gameplay I would have thought there would have been more interactive learning from some of the locals. The other disappointment is with the lack of actual Chinese actors that were used for the characters. For heavens sake, this is a game about Imperial China in the 18th century and they've got Anglo Saxons playing the roles of Chinese noblemen. But to be totally fair, Forbidden City is a great game



with heaps to offer those of you that are adventure fans. It may not be a Tomb Raider or Fade to Black but then again it isn't meant to be, it's a game of mystery and intrigue in a country that will puzzle you, entertain you and even educate you. Alas, our northern cousins don't look a bit like the characters portrayed.

Matt Adamson

PLUS+



<http://www.cryo-interactive.com/new/english/frame/s/frame.htm>

74%

Category Adventure
Players 1
Publisher Cryo
Price TBA
Rating G
Available Now

For Great history lesson. Easy and learner friendly interface.

Against A tad boring and a little patronising.

Need P133, 16MB RAM, 4xCD

Want P200, 32MB RAM

3D SUPPORT

Supports 3DFX, Rendition, PowerVR and nVidia accelerators

MONTEZUMA'S RETURN!

15 years after the event, the (alleged) classic Montezuma's Revenge gets an update. It sucks.

What a quaint little idea! You take an old classic (the term classic here is used quite loosely), rework the basic elements of it, throw in some new features and spruce it up with some jaw-dropping 3D-accelerated graphics. You release it to the public and watch the big bucks come flooding in. In theory, this all sounds almost plausible - at least to these people it did.

Lara meets Mario

Montezuma's Revenge! is the said classic on which the aptly titled Montezuma's Return! is based upon. The whole idea behind Monte's Return stems from the wave of interest created by that Femme Fatale, Lara Croft, and that short fat dude, Mario. Yep, it's that obvious. Monte's Return is basically a 3D platformer, with a strong Tomb Raider vibe and plenty of silly jumpy actiony bits a la Mario 64. Except your hero for today is Max Montezuma, rumoured descendant of the legendary Aztec emperor of the same name.

Shoddy update

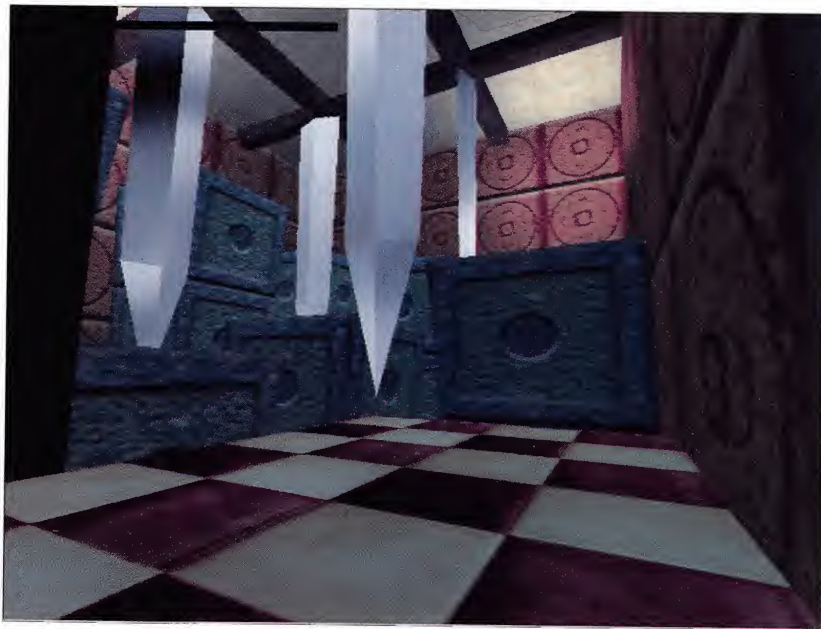
After revisiting the past, I'm afraid. A nice gesture on the devel-

opers part (although perhaps not a very well thought out one), is the inclusion of a PC-compatible version of Montezuma's Revenge! on the CD. In all of its 1983 glory, players can gush at just how much of Monte's Revenge! can be seen within Monte's Return, even with an ample 15 years of reflection time between drinks. Whoever called Montezuma's Revenge a classic was being a tad polite, and perhaps was playing a different game altogether - for it positively stinks. A classic will stand the test of time, and Monte's Revenge would have been quite happily forgotten if it wasn't brought back into our lives again by a shoddy nineties update. Well, it's the Return we're after, not Revenge. At least, not yet.

Pretty, but pointless

Monte's Return is quite pleasing to the eye. The textures are bright and detailed, though they do lack variety. With a 3Dfx card you have access to perhaps the most gratuitous use of coloured lighting ever seen in a game. You'll quite frequently come across rooms that pulsate from blue to green, and yellow to purple of their own accord, for no apparent reason. It's nice, and it'll make you check to see if anyone's been spiking your water, but at the same time it's just a bit silly and pointless.

Using the straight keyboard-style of control is messy at best. One of the only few



things in Monte's Return's favour is the ability to follow the mlook model of control as first seen in Quake. Even then you'll still wonder what the developers were thinking when they created the engine. Death occurs mostly thanks to crappy controls.

Unchallenging challenges

The thing that's most disconcerting about the whole Montezuma's Return experience is the blurb on the back of the box. Since when did "challenging 3D puzzles" become a technical feature? And anyway, these challenging 3D puzzles are quite below par. The levels are simply a "casually work your way to the exit" affair - challenging, perhaps, to an untrained monkey suffering from dementia.

Montezuma's Return tries to mix a few dif-

ferent styles of gaming together, though it unfortunately ends up suffering from an identity crisis. And there's no amply proportioned girl. Sigh.

March Stepnik



42%

Category 3D action/adventure
Players 1
Publisher Take 2 Interactive
Price \$TBA
Rating TBA
Available Now

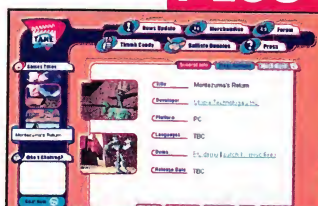
For Nice use of accelerated graphics technology. Simple game design.

Against Half-arsed use of accelerated graphics technology. Simple game design.

Need P133, 16MB RAM, Win 9x

Want P166, 32MB RAM, 3Dfx card

PLUS+



<http://take2games.com/main.html>

For patches that fix this game. Fix in the broadest sense of the term

DIE BY THE SWORD: Limb From Limb

A meaty expansion for that dungeon-hacking medieval swordplay simulation. Top stuff

Ahh, Die By The Sword. A classic game, with the most realistic simulation of hand-to-hand weapon combat ever. Developers Treyarch, those mad English professors of anatomy have done it again and brought us another chunky mouthful of the same stuff. Boy, were we hungry!

Joystick joy

In case you didn't know, Die By The Sword has a patented human-motion-simulation system called VSIM, which allows you to use your joystick to control the position of your Sword (or whatever weapon you're wielding) in real time with Newtonian physics. You drive character movement with the other hand, and embark on a Borg-like immersion into a gritty medieval world, where even the most flippant combat ambitions come to life. More pedestrian players can choose combined mouse/keyboard or all-keyboard controls if they really want to, but this is not recommended. Combine the control system with carefully calculated wound ballistics that allows limbs and body parts to be chopped off, and well, the rest is history.

The game basically involves stalking about in a Tolkien-esque universe slaying monsters in swordfights and swearing in a heavy European accent, solving some Tomb-Raiderish puzzles and exploring the very nice environments. And chopping off the limbs of those nasties that dare to cross your path, of course.

Be a monster

The added stuff we have this time around includes the ability to play the adventure parts of the

game as any of the monsters (for the weird at heart), and a big improvement in the variety of characters and optional weapons to play with and against in multiplayer, as well as some new multiplayer modes.

The most notable improvement, for me, is the warrior-maiden Maya, who now has a completed arsenal and her own unique jocular expletives which are actually quite amusing in a wry sort of way. She can also be colour coordinated to look like a mace-toting Anna Kournikova, complete with short white skirt and blond hair, which is nice. She also has a terribly apt "Gothic" flavour, if that takes your fancy (for-loorn!).

New multiplay options

The new quest which you can embark on takes you on a fairly familiar path through nicely detailed dungeons with huge masonry puzzles, peppered with the delicious new assortment of weird and nasty beasts to kill. You can also play the quests in co-operative mode, which is just excellent.

The multiplayer side of things has been beefed up no end, from the ability to play in teams with

AI teammates, the aforementioned weapons, wild new arenas and colour customisations. This has always been a hilarious multiplayer game and the options in this pack will make any fan whoop for joy. Of special mention is Kobold Hockey



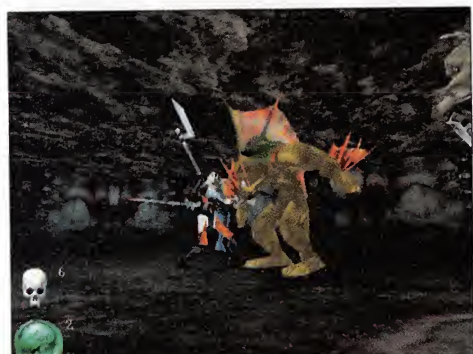
The new multiplayer (including co-op) options make this expansion pack worthwhile

mode, where you play as giant club-wielding Ogres, smacking a hapless dog-eared beast airborne around a grassy field with your juggernaut strength. This will engage devotees no end, as perhaps not surprisingly the game does get a little bit physical, to say the least, and very competitive. It's also a wonderfully surreal experience!

Overall, it's a great expansion for a classic and still very funny game.

Ed Dawson

PLUS+



79%

Category Swordfighting sim
Players 1-4 (IPX, TCP/IP)
Publisher Interplay
Price \$TBA
Rating MA15+
Available Now

For New monsters, new weapons, new multiplayer arenas.

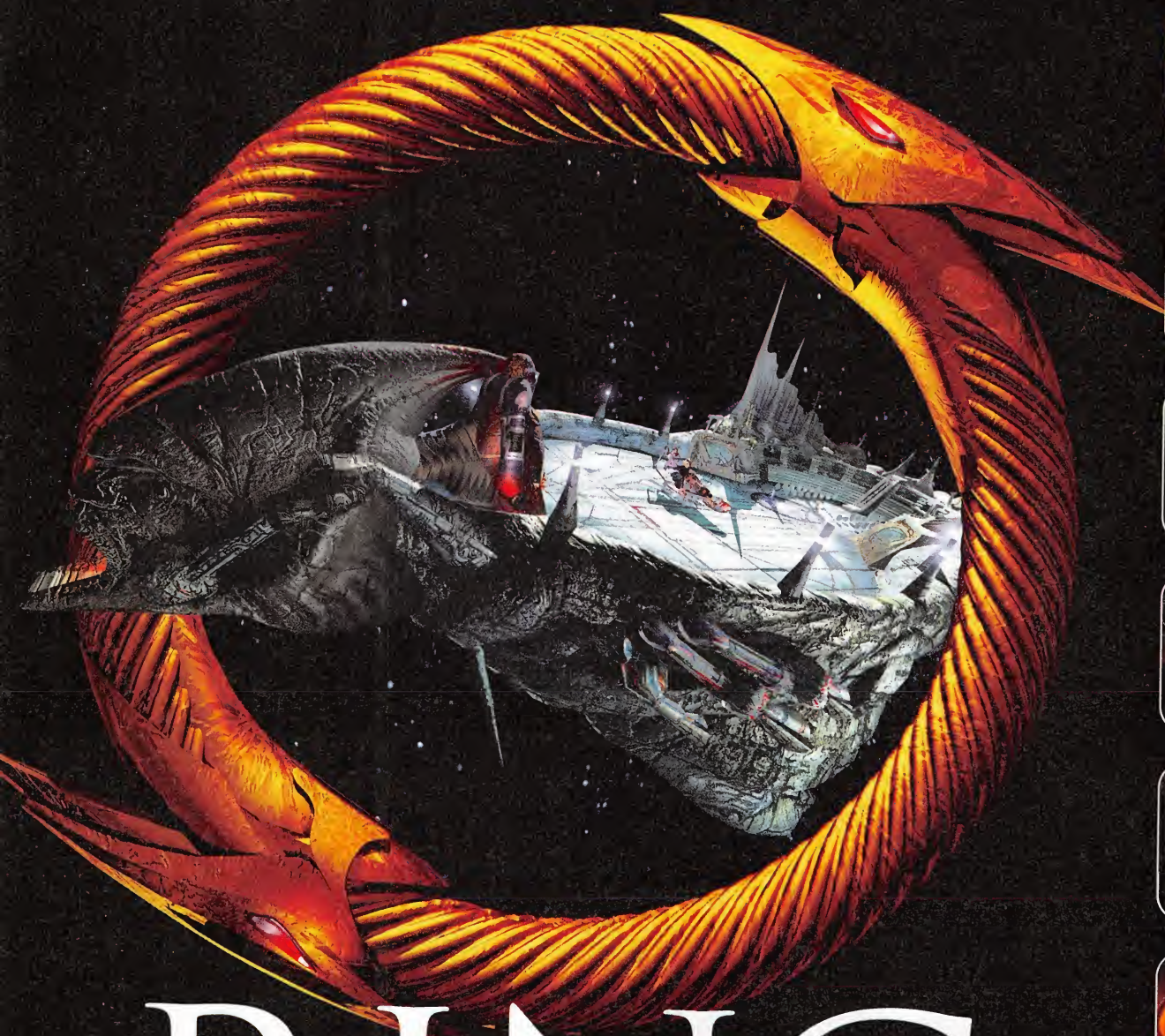
Against Unfortunately, terrible multiplayer menu cripples the between-game flow. Treyarch, fix your ruddy menu!

Need Full version of Die By The Sword, P133, Win 9x, 16MB RAM, 4xCD.

Want P166, 32MB RAM, 8xCD, any 3D accelerator card

3D SUPPORT

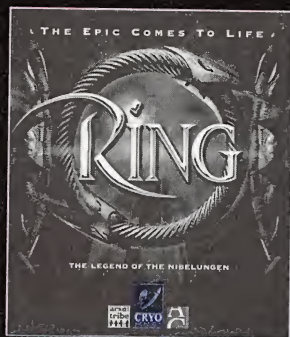
Supports 3DFX, Rendition, PowerVR and nVidia accelerators



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ANIMATED VIOLENCE

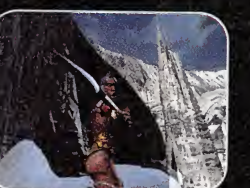
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REAH

Hey, look! You can make an adventure game without illogical puzzles. No, really

Best described as a curious cross between *Myst*, *Atlantis* and the movie *Stargate*, *Reah* is the next adventure game to attempt to depose its predecessors.

The game sees the player assume the role of a journalist sent to the planet *Reah* to report on the discovery of an ancient alien artefact. Over the course of his investigation, it transpires that the artefact is, in fact, a transportation device similar to that found in *Stargate*. While examining the artefact, a portal to an alternative reality opens and the journalist, helpless against a ferocious vortex, is sucked through. Unfortunately, the portal closes after discharging the journalist on a dying planet where water is the most precious commodity. In a rather predictable turn of events, it becomes the journalist's goal to find a way to reopen the portal so that he may return to *Reah*.

Turn around

Reah's interface is simple, yet extremely effective. The mouse is used to both control the player's first-person view and to interact with the environment. Navigation within the game is accomplished through clicking on accessible locations, with the game simulating walking to that location by flowing the player's view toward it. Fortunately, the lack of total freedom of movement is compensated for by the

immersive qualities of the game world. Unlike many similar titles, *Reah* gives the player the freedom to smoothly rotate their view 360 degrees. Because of this feature, the game environment seems truly three dimensional rather than a slide-show collection of still images. Animated objects within these environments are



visually flawless and, in many cases, spectacular. In particular, the three singing faces on the fountain will captivate and fascinate the player with their almost-real-enough-to-touch splendour.

Good, logical puzzles!

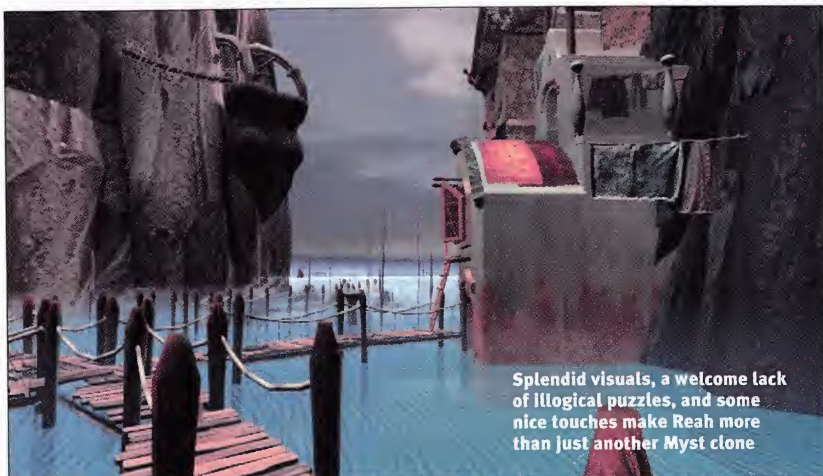
You progress through the game by interacting with various characters and solving numerous puzzles. The puzzles themselves increase in complexity as the plot advances and may take quite a while to solve. They are, however, intriguing, ingenious and a lot of fun to solve. Bonus points go to the developers who

thankfully refrained from including any completely illogical puzzles.

Soapie-style acting

Faultless photo-realistic visuals enhance the overall game experience and provide the player with countless awe-inspiring experiences. Atmospheric music complements the on-screen action perfectly. The actors who portray the enormous number of world inhabitants are quite skilled but, on occasion, the player will cringe at the C-grade performances of some of the characters less important to *Reah*'s plot. Because the player speaks a completely different language to that of the alien world's inhabitants, a puzzle must be solved which enables spoken words to be translated into English. Once this has been accomplished the player will notice that, because the characters converse in their own language, their lips are out of synch with what is actually heard.

PLUS+



Splendid visuals, a welcome lack of illogical puzzles, and some nice touches make *Reah* more than just another *Myst* clone

A simple touch, but one which lends an element of originality to such a common predicament.

While the plot is grossly unoriginal, the multiple endings add excellent longterm value to a title which resides in a genre where such games are traditionally played through only once. *Reah* will especially appeal to those looking for something a little more cerebral than most games on the market.

Brett Robinson

78%

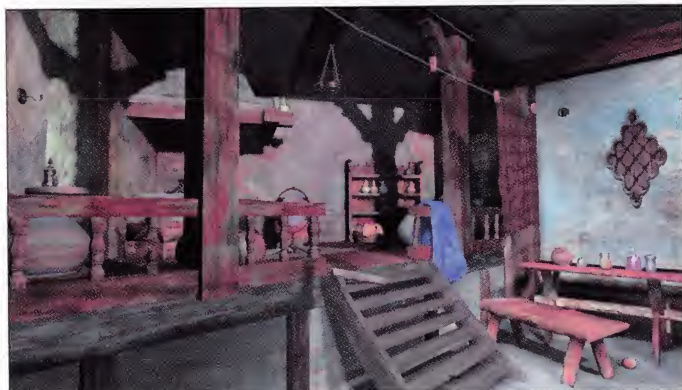
Category Adventure
Players 1
Publisher Project 2
Price \$TBA
Rating G
Available Now

For Stunning graphics and a truly immersive setting

Against Predictable plot and occasionally shocking acting performances

Need P166, 32MB RAM, 250MB HD Space, 8xCD

Want P233, 64MB RAM, 350MB HD Space, 20xCD



DESCENT FREESPACE: *Silent Threat*

40 new missions, a couple of new ships, some new weaponry, and plenty of value

So, after years of senseless bloody struggle the Vasudans are now our allies and the only thing that remains of the titanic conflict against the Shivans is a long brown stain in my underdacks. A stain that has not only come to be revered amongst members of my family as a representation of all that is fine and noble, but has also become the subject of a twelve part documentary series on SBS and indeed appreciated by all humanity as a symbol of our tenacious struggle for life and stubborn refusal to bow to those stinking Shivan rent boys. But now the dogs of war are once again sniffing each other's butts and making appreciative noises, and the time has come to remove my lucky jocks from their gilded frame in the national museum and don them once more, and this time...I won't wash them even once!

More than before

Praise the Lord for bringing us the person who invented mission packs, I say! What greater disappointment is there than reaching the end of your favourite game and having no place left to go? Silent Threat offers the Freespace junky forty new missions, which by the way is ten more than the original game. The tradeoff is that Interplay haven't put any resources into creating new cutscenes for the mission pack and while the storyline has many interesting twists it would have been much better with some nice rendered graphics to push it along.

Thickening plot

The Shivans are back but it seems that it isn't only the 'Hammer Of Light' who have betrayed their own people, some reports have been coming in of stolen GTI stealth ships attacking our shipping as well as the Vasudans', obviously causing trouble in an attempt to destroy our alliance. In Silent Threat the plot definitely thickens! These new ships are the 'Loki' class

and become available to the player too as the game progresses (though their stealth technology is conveniently 'compromised' so you don't get any advantage from it!). Not wanting to give too much away there is also another new ship type, as well as a new capital ship and some new weapons - two primary and two secondary to be precise.

No Multiplayer

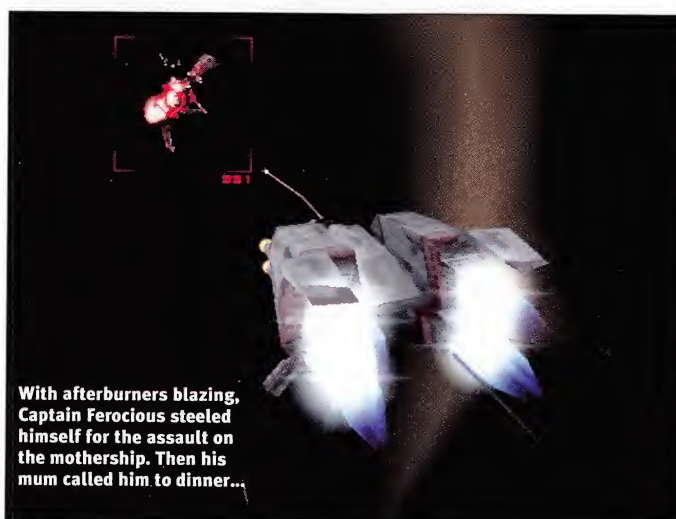
Those of you who enjoyed Freespace's 20 mission multiplayer campaign have been sorely neglected in this release though. Of the forty new missions none are designed exclusively for multiplayer play and there is no new multiplayer campaign here. The latest version of FRED (Freespace's mission designer) is included however and there's nothing stopping you from whipping up one of your

own. In fact a good number of the missions in this pack were actually created by Freespace fans using FRED and submitted to Interplay's Freespace website (see PLUS).

Bodgy instructions

All in all a good investment for Freespace fans itching for some more action. One little word of warning, the instructions in the box don't actually tell you how to launch the new missions and they can be a pain to find. You need to go into the campaign selection bay from the main game screen and select the Silent Threat campaign there, not from the autorun splash screen as the manual suggests.

George Soropos



80%

Category Space Action
Players 1-12 (all forms)
Publisher Interplay
Price \$TBA
Rating G
Available Now

For 40 new missions for one of the best space action games around, plus new ships, guns and missiles!

Against No new cutscenes to flesh out the storyline

Need P133 (with 3D)
P166 (without) Win
9x, 32MB RAM,
8xCD, Original version of Descent: Freespace

Want PII 300, 3D card,
48MB RAM

3D SUPPORT

Glide and Direct 3D are supported

HEDZ

Hed finds head, then uses said head to battle other heads for head

Hedz is Hasbro's latest endeavour to have an impact on the gaming world. It's about a sadistic alien race that travels the universe stealing people's heads, adopting that head's personality and then playing a techno-styled skirmish that's fought out on an asteroid that mimics a setting from earth. Phew! It sounds like a...fantastic concept, eh?

Twisted, bizarre, wacky

The story is that you're a Hed, an alien living in relative peace and harmony, when one day you come across a decapitated human head. Being the explorer that you are, you try the head on for size and discover that you can adopt that head's power. Your home planet goes crazy about wearing human heads and it becomes the latest fashion craze. This gets a bit out of hand so both planets make an agreement where the Hedz can only use human heads for sport. And that's how it all started.

Elvis head!

The object of the game is to choose five heads for yourself, pick an asteroid to do battle on and away you go. The head selection is huge with over two hundred and twenty different heads to pick from, the more memorable were the aborigine and kangaroo heads as well as the punk rocker, football player and the ever popular Elvis head.

The choice of heads is pretty important as it's vital to obtain a good mix of weapons and abilities. For example, there's the redneck head that uses a gun which does heaps of damage whereas the Scottish head just hurls haggis and does very little damage. The game is viewed in the third person perspective using an active camera to catch the action with. The whole point of the game is to defeat the enemy Hedz, thereby winning their heads which you can collect and use, and the more heads you have the bigger the arsenal at your disposal.



Simple, cute, arcade-y console-y port-y fun. Not that there's anything wrong with that...



Don't play with yourself

Hedz really shines when it comes to multiplayer mayhem, you can either play over a LAN network or on the net. With the weird and wonderful array of

heads that are available, it really is good fun to go on the net and win heads off complete strangers, although some people tend to get a bit upset if you win their best head. The graphics are another thing that makes this game with each of the twenty combat asteroids being decorated with bright and colourful surroundings. With a total number of two hundred and twenty five heads this game has the tendency to become incredibly addictive as you strive to collect every head that's available, kind of like stamp collecting with a cyber space twist to it, but much more fun.

Overall, Hedz is a title that has a bit to offer but not much when it comes to long term gameplay. It's definitely a multiplayer game, because the single player game is really a bit boring.



If you're looking for long term appeal then this won't deliver. However if all you want is a bit of fun and a good multiplayer game then Hedz should be right up your alley.

Matt Adamsons

69%

Category Action/strategy
Players 1-Multi
Publisher Hasbro Interactive
Price \$TBA
Rating G
Available Now

For The multiplayer mode. The hilarious heads. Gets the award for coolest looking computer game box for 1998.

Against Relatively easy and boring single player mode. Not enough asteroids.

Need P100, 16MB RAM, 4xCD, Win 9x

Want P233, 32MB RAM, 56k Modem

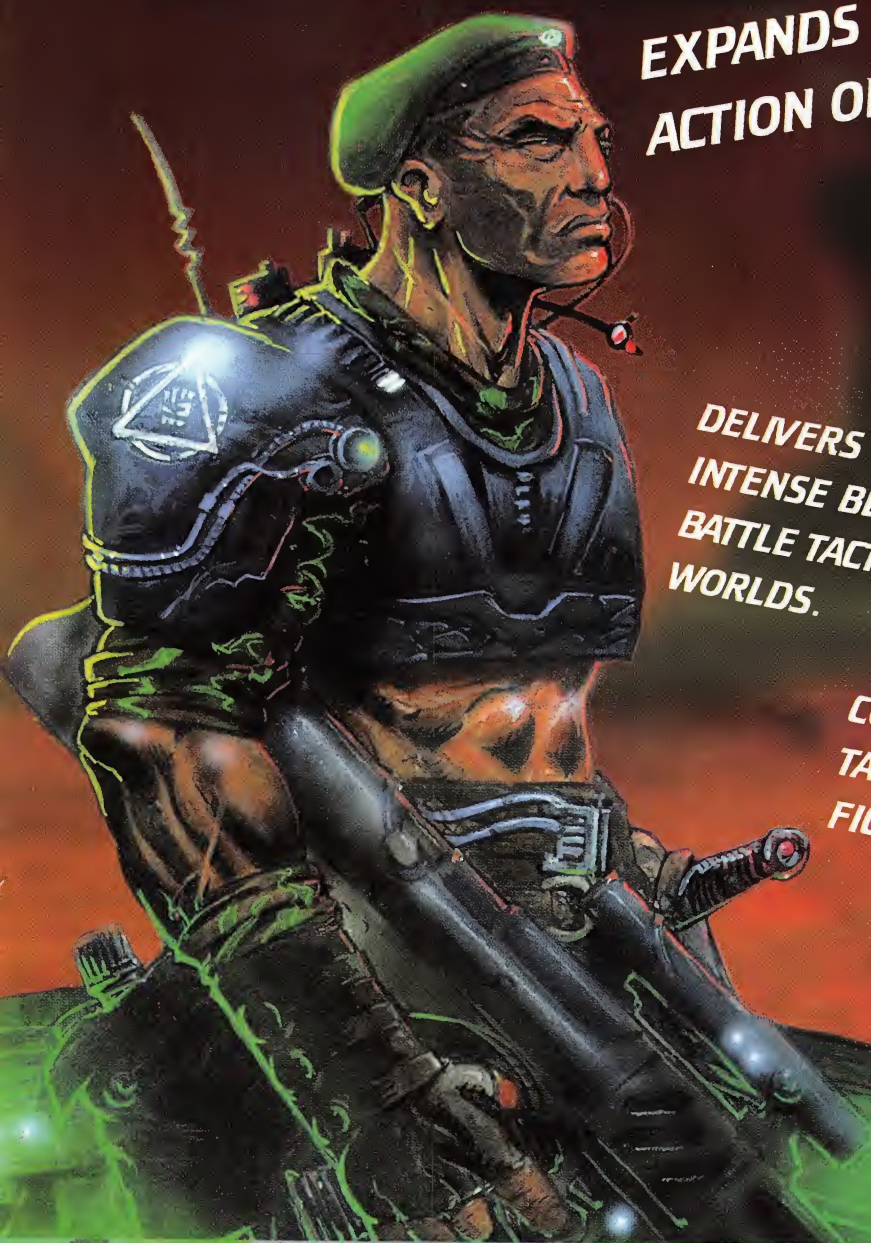
UPRISING² LEAD AND DESTROY

EXPANDS ON THE HEART-POUNDING
ACTION OF THE ORIGINAL



DELIVERS FUTURISTIC WAR IMMERSION WITH AN
INTENSE BLEND OF ACTION AND QUICK-PACED
BATTLE TACTICS - ALL TAKING PLACE IN VAST 3D
WORLDS.

COMMAND BRIGADES OF SCI-FI TROOPS,
TANKS, GUNSHIPS AND BOMBERS WHILE
FIGHTING ALONGSIDE YOUR TROOPS



3DO

CYCLONE
STUDIOS



Directsoft

info@directsoft.com.au

THIS TITLE YET TO BE CLASSIFIED

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What could be more relaxing than a stroll around your local Golf course, club in one hand and bird gun in the other. Golf sims have almost been with us since the dawn of the new era and have steadily become more and more realistic, both visually and conceptually. But while action games have been able to fully utilise the advantages of 3D acceleration, Golf sims have been restrained from such leaps forward by the simple fact that they force an information bottleneck at the point where the hard drive and memory meet, not where the graphics subsystem and the processor meet. And as hard drive transfer rates haven't improved by anywhere near as much as graphics throughput Links 99 looks, well, pretty much the same as Links 98.

So without this usually obvious improvement what other reasons have Access given Golf fans to rush out and part with their cashola? Firstly there's the all new Modes of Play options (MOP for short) and the Modes Of Play designer. Modes Of Play are a series of very specific rules, features and challenges which you can use to custom build any crazy sort of Golf contest. There are over thirty of these in the game already and the designer lets you make up as many as you like. You can even swap MOP's on Access' Links website. Some examples of the MOP's are: Australian Hogan, 4 Club Skins and Putt or Die!

more courses and Access have decided to go the whole hog and include four full eighteen hole courses: St. Andrews, Bay Hill Club and Lodge and the Entrada at Snow Canyon. These offer a good variety of difficulty and scenery and should stop you from needing any add-on courses for a while. Of course it goes without saying that Links 99 is fully compatible with all the old courses as well.

On top of this Access have done a wee bit of innovating by including real-time voice support and a spectator mode for internet play! I bet all of you are just itching to rush out and by this now so you can get on-line and watch people playing computer Golf. I know my whole life has been leading to this moment.

infotainment segments about each of the courses, about Golf in general and about the Flabblaster 2001 - The Better Way To Firmer Buttocks. OK..not the last one.

All up I'd have to say that this is a worthwhile upgrade for the wizened Links fan, the MOP's add a lot to the game in terms of variety and the ability to be a bit silly with the game, which I like. And the inclusion of four full courses is great value too.

There is one new graphical feature in Links 99. 3D course objects, but to be honest you hardly notice them anyway. If you're a multimedia fan (and heck who isn't, *haw*) Links 99 also comes chock-a-block with long



86%

For An array of new features for the Golf freak with customisation being the main focus and four full courses included in the box.

Against Unusually for a new Golf game, there's no huge leap forward in graphical quality over the previous generation - nowhere left to go?

Need P150, 32MB RAM,
4xCD

Want P2 233, 64MB
RAM



WARGASM

Sadly, not quite as stimulating as it sounds...

Apparently in the future the World Wide Web brings an end to famine, poverty and bloodshed. Has Bill Gates decided to give all his money away? Is everyone so obese from an endless diet of Pizza and Jolt that they simply can't get out of their chair for long enough to bother anyone? Who knows.

Blast-a-thon

Wargasm is a straight up arcade action blast-a-thon in a similar vein to Return Fire 2. Take command of an infantryman, M1 Tank, APC or Comanche (well it looks like a Comanche) and head off to battle. The game places you in front of a world map with different zones and battlefields marked out. Select a likely target area based on the terrain, weather and your tactical goals and jump right in there.

Once you've started a game you can take control of another vehicle by going to your map screen and simply clicking on it. Each map has its own unique objectives that need to be met in order to win it over to your side: These may be to destroy a bridge or factory, guard an installation, capture a base, rescue an imprisoned comrade or maybe to hold up the drive through at the local KFC.

War is lonely

The important thing to realise is that, even though you have a whole bunch of troops and vehicles out there, you're the only one on your side! In other words you haven't got any wingmen or team mates to watch your butt, you're on your own. If you get toasted, just pop into another vehicle or take control of another trooper and continue the fight.

DID have previously only been known for their excellent flight sims and work with the British and U.S. military (they designed the simulators for the Tornado and the new super-secret Lockheed stealth spy plane) and this foray into gut blasting action is certainly a new

direction for them. One might be a bit confused by the sudden proliferation of these sorts of action titles so let me explain.

Conspiracy theories

All of you have heard the term OEM before, it's what they call the cut down versions of games and applications that come bundled with new bits of hardware like 3D accelerators and sound cards. Well it's not too far a leap then to imagine that companies would start to develop titles specifically to cater to this growing market. OEM titles have to look great (Wargasm does!) be quick to learn (uh huh) easy to play (yep) and simple to set up on the average users machine (oh yeah) And funnily enough Wargasm gets top marks in all these areas!

And for that reason, I'm sure it will be coming bundled with everything from the latest 3Dfx cards to the latest Scanners and Digital Cameras! And it will be hard for people to justify paying full price for it. The same thing happened with Incoming last year.

George Soropos



Plenty of eye candy and plenty of fast, simple fun - but not much else



80%

Category Action
Players 1-8 (TCP/IP, LAN & LPX)
Publisher DID
Price \$TBA
Rating M
Available Now

For Spunky graphics, no learning curve and lots of big explosions!

Against Lacks depth for those who like a bit of strategy, gets a bit repetitive after a while.

Need P133, 16MB RAM, Win 9x

Want P233, 3D accelerator, 32 MB RAM

3D SUPPORT

D3D and Glide

FIFA 99

The best football simulation ever just got better

Ah yes, EA has sent down from on high another in their series of FIFA games - and luckily enough, just in time for the Christmas/New Year spending spree. Is it worth treating yourself to a late Christmas present? Are there enough new features and enhancements to warrant you putting FIFA 98 and/or World Cup in storage in favour of the latest version? Well, yes, though there are still a few areas that could be bettered.

Room for improvement

As we've come to expect with each new version, the graphics and game engine have been reworked so that there's even more detail and fluidity in player movement. As usual, these features remain at the cutting edge of what's possible with today's PCs, with players' stumbles, twists and turns almost exactly the same as in real life.

Unfortunately, there are a few areas that still require attention from EA before they can really sit back and say that they've done the best they could. Firstly, there's the lack of TCP/IP play. Now, EA say that the Internet is just too slow, but other comparable games can be played over the Internet, so why not this? Number two in my 'pet hates about the FIFA series', and no less of an annoyance is the menu system they continue to use, which is as usual slick and pretty, but not nearly as functional as it should be. And then there's the skill moves, which had been well

PLUS+

CaveNews.com

FIFA 99 ONLINE

www.fifa99.net

Not the official site, but there's plenty of great info here.

done in previous FIFA's, but in 99 for some reason a few have been taken out, so that the only useful moves left are jinking left and right and the spin move, which is really quite disappointing.

New features

OK, my whines are out of the way, now let's get to the good stuff, and there is plenty of good stuff too. Players are smaller this time around, so the pitch feels a more realistic size, and the way that they set themselves out on the field allows for more open space and possession play, and far fewer 'runaway' goals than



with 98 or WC. A few new control moves have been added as well, like catching the ball on the chest and guarding it while it comes under control, though it is a little too easy to grab the ball on the chest and turn 180 degrees in a split second. Also, in what's probably my favourite new gameplay feature, the all but useless 'lob' has been revamped so that it's more of a lofted pass now, and comes in very handy when getting the ball up to your forwards, or switching play. Happily, the speed burst seems to also have been tweaked, so that it is possible to cut a swathe through a couple of defenders on speed alone, but you won't be able to keep it up for the length of the pitch. You should find that it's used much more as a speed burst than as a button you're constantly pressing, as with previous FIFA games.

Custom leagues

There should be enough variety in the leagues and teams available to keep most people happy, with first divisions from the English Premier league, Spain, Germany, Italy,



There's even a Golden Goal mode, where the aim is to score a set number of goals first. Too cool.

the Netherlands, Belgium, Brazil, France, Portugal, Scotland, Sweden, USA, as well as a European Super League and international teams (including Australia). You can even design your own leagues or cups, with an extensive range of parameters if you're not happy with EA's version of the 'Dream League'.

For anyone with less than my fanatical interest in the sport of football, and the FIFA series of sims, you'd be hard pressed to come up with any serious reservations about this - it's another top game from EA and well worth a look if you've any interest in the sport.

Gareth Jones

GOLD **92%**

Category Football Sim
Players 1-20 (Modem, IPX, serial)
Publisher EA Sports
Price \$TBA
Rating G
Available Now

For Cutting edge graphics, European Super league, custom leagues, more realistic gameplay, better animation, and smaller players.

Against Some skill moves have been removed, the menus are still substandard, and there's no TCP/IP play.

Need P100, 16MB RAM, 4xCD

Want P2 233, 64MB RAM, 12MB Voodoo2, 10 button Gamepad

3D SUPPORT

Direct3D and Glide are supported

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Jetfighter Full Burn

CATEGORY flight sim

PLAYERS 1-8

PUBLISHER Interplay

PRICE \$TBA

RATING G

AVAILABLE Now

NEED P133, 4xCD, 16MB RAM

WANT 3Dfx Voodoo card (realistically a need)

overall

67%

It's another cut down and relatively simple flight sim, fairly simple and easy to get into.

There's strong indications that there's plenty of interest in flight sims, but also that many novice flight jockeys are a little intimidated by the level of complexity in some of the more realistic games. Hence, there must be a role for flight games that lean towards being a realistic sim, but without the confusing, confronting, and overly difficult aspects - and this is pretty much exactly what Jetfighter Full Burn is trying to be.

This Mission Studios game is set in the early 21st century and it concerns conflict over oil between Norway and Russia. As an United States pilot, you will come in to bat for Norway, though you can fly for Russia as well. There is an extensive background story (in an extensive manual), but let's skip that and get flying!

The controls are logical and there are lots of them, so you will need to keep your manual handy. Movement is pretty realistic and enjoyable but playing without 3D acceleration would be next to pointless. The game scenarios



are quite challenging, with the usual array of air-to-ground, air-to-air missiles and cannons. The A.I. is quite good and a decent challenge but I get the feeling this game would be best (like many others) in a multiplayer situation.

There are some parts of this title which are not up to scratch, however. For a start, before or in between flying missions, you can walk around your base in 3D, visiting various features such as

It's probably best enjoyed after a viewing of Top Gun, with the soundtrack on in the background

your quarters, the C.O.'s office and the Hangar. This is a real waste of space on a game, and anyone that plays for more than 5 minutes will use the shortcut menu every time. Overall though, JFB is relatively simple to learn, and for the novice flight simmer looking for an entry point into a flight sims, you could do worse.

Return Fire 2

CATEGORY Action

PLAYERS 1-4 (Internet/LAN)

PUBLISHER Ripcord Games

PRICE \$TBA

RATING TBA

AVAILABLE Now

NEED P133, 16MB RAM, 4xCD, Win 9x

WANT P200, 3D accelerator, 32MB RAM

overall

72%

A rousing musical score! Big things going boom! What more could you want?

It's been more than two years since Return Fire and it seems Ripcord Games didn't feel the need to radically overhaul the original game design. For Return Fire II is still basically a strong, visually impressive exercise in frantic Capture The Flag-style gaming. There are now six vehicles to control throughout the game; the tank, the missile-carrier/mine-laying vehicle, the jeep, a helicopter, a jet-fighter, and even a boat! Each vehicle offers their strengths and weaknesses, though the jeep is the only one that can collect the enemies flag and bring it back to your base. Since victory in RF2 can only be attained by capturing your enemy's flag, the vulnerable jeep becomes your most important vehicle.

Where RF2 really takes off is with multiplayer. Up to four players can duke it out for some hectic multiplayer action. While the single player AI is of a good standard, RF2 just begs to be played against real live opponents. The game's network code is rather robust too, so good quality net games (with minimal



fuss) should be the standard. Return Fire 2 has been given the 3D acceleration treatment, and the end result is quite pleasing. Nothing spectacular, nothing offensive - just good use of 3D acceleration.

The use of well-known classical pieces during the game is fantastic - talk about creating atmosphere! Hear Handel's Hallelujah as you claim victory from the jaws of defeat - stirring stuff! Still, Return Fire is let

Ever wondered why the Aztecs really died out?

down in a few areas. Vehicle control is frustrating, and the in-game menu navigation system is confusing at best - thanks to the use of the most unintuitive icons ever seen. Ah well, if you can get past these minor points, you've got a fantastically frantic action strategy game.

March Stepnik

Fighter Pilot

Welcome friends, to the PC game equivalent of an action movie. **Fighter Pilot** is the new combat flight simulation from Electronic Arts. You are "Cobra", the new pilot on the block and as the game states you have been chosen for your "natural ability and potential" (!) There are a number of different high power aircraft to control, including the F/A-18, F-117, F-22 and Su-35. Your weaponry consists of cannons and various air-to-air & air-to-ground missiles. The missions range from the pure assault of enemy targets to protection of friendly craft. All in all, it's a fairly complete package.

However, much like a Tom Cruise film, you are not expecting a great deal of realism in the experience. The controls are not really near to an authentic aircraft and you can do things in these fighter jets that are physically impossible, and even when invulnerability is off it's pretty hard to crash. One of the best parts of the game is that when you shoot down an enemy fight-

er, your pilot comments with a quick one-liner ("Do they have monkeys flying these planes?!" or "Ba Boom!" or my personal favourite "You're in for a real BAD day!"). These are all things that a serious simulation gamer would cringe at, but for what **Fighter Pilot** sets out to do, it's successful.

The preliminary mission screens and options are easy to access. The missions are not particularly long and not particularly difficult but at the same time, it's fun flying a big old aircraft like it was your Dad's car. I must say that an Iraqi pilot steals the show by saying, in flight, "You fly like a drunken camel!". If you're look-



ing for some flying action with lots of missiles and less worry about thrust and airspeed, **Fighter Pilot** is right up your aisle.

John Dewhurst

CATEGORY Flight sim

PLAYERS 1 - TBA

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts

PRICE \$TBA

RATING G

AVAILABLE Now

NEED P166, 16MB RAM, 2xCD

WANT 3D acceleration and popcorn

overall

71%

Rock 'n' Roll never sounded so good from a cockpit.

Global Domination

Global Domination places you in the position of an international gun for hire. It is the next century and international diplomacy has crumbled. You are a member of ULTRA, the Universal Tactical Response Agency. Your job is to deal with defensive and offensive situations against the evil W.O.E.

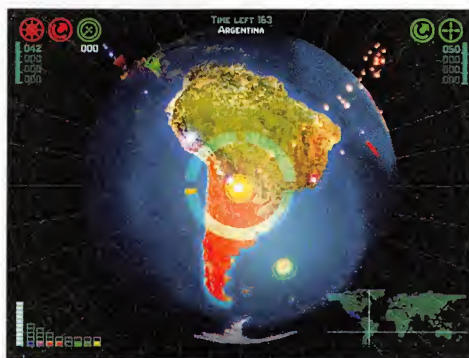
Global Domination is a nice idea. Apparently based on James Bond's famous battle scene in "Never Say Never Again", it offers that Bondesque dose of ego boosting, being in control of an arsenal of weaponry that you could launch at any particular country (send in the missiles, Moneypenny...heh heh). The game screen is clear and well laid out, explosions are suitably impressive and the action is quite good. The interspersing of video cut scenes feels a little tacked on though, as these characters really never enter the game personally.

While it's a good idea, something is lost in the realisation. As a player you are sent instructions by ULTRA on what to do and the successful completion of missions involves doing these and

nothing else. There is a time limit on missions (how often does that happen in real life?) and this really detracts from the sense of immersion in the game. When attacking target nations, you are given preset targets of missile silos, defensive systems, etc., so there's really nothing to it. There is no real option for the player to exercise any kind of personal strategy, it just ends up being a point'n'click-fest.

Basically, this game suffers from a lack of good old-fashioned gameplay. Like all great disappointments, **Global Domination** was a good idea that was poorly executed. However, if having a hell of a lot of power in a gaming experience appeals to you, then roll up.

John Dewhurst



Just like that scene from 'Never Say Never Again', but sadly it was much better in the movie

CATEGORY Real time strategy

PLAYERS 1-16

PUBLISHER Psygnosis

PRICE \$TBA

RATING TBA

AVAILABLE Now

NEED P166, 4xCD

WANT Nothing in particular

overall

63%

A nice package, and nice and easy to get into, but there's not many reasons to keep playing.

RIDING STAR

As Homer discovered, owning a horse is horribly expensive, so why not try this instead?

Publisher: Metro Games
Players: 1
Rated: G8+
Need: P100, Wingx, 16MB RAM
Want: P166, Wingx, 32MB RAM

Who wouldn't like a horse of their own? You know, someone to frolic through the meadows with on a sunny spring day? Someone to pat, stroke, kiss, whip and ride? Someone who'll whinny when they see you and drool on your hand while you feed them? Someone to leave an aromatic surprise in the stables for you? If only a large paddock and a few thousand dollars were at hand...

You are Sarah Greene (pronounced Sa- Rah), best friend to Star, and, as the box tells you, care for him, ride him, love him.



Scape up your own horsies dung, just like in real life!

By choosing the multiplayer option, you can compete against your friends to see just who loves him the best - which is much more fun than comparing Barbie collections

Riding Star is a real show pony riding sim, complete with mucking out the stables, picking out his hooves and other groom-

ing requirements, for that extra touch of realism. Going through the rigmarole of caring for a horse is usually the last thing you'd want to be doing with a real horse, so why would you want to go through it on a riding sim? Well, to feel like you really

belong, but without any actual physical labour or incredibly offensive horsey bi-products. This means of course, you can only enter the competition once a "day", and each time you MUST muck out the stables, groom and feed him if you want to compete again.

The visuals and controls of the dressage and

show jumping is reminiscent of the equestrian event on Summer Games for Commodore 64, with only a slight improvement in handling. But in order to earn some real points you have to make sure Star has sufficient food and water, is feeling good, and is looking simply stunning.

This one rates a 7.2 on my "I can't believe they programmed this" scale of software for girls.

Agata Budinska



LOONY TUNES

COSMIC CAPERS ANIMATED JIGSAW

Wild and wacky jigsaw fun

Publisher: Southpeak Interactive
Players: 1
Rated: G8+
Need: P133, 16 MB RAM, Win 95
Want: P11 233, 32 MB RAM, Win 98

WARNING: THIS PRODUCT WILL CAUSE MASSIVE LOSS OF PRODUCTIVITY. It really should say this on the box, for rarely do you get a puzzle game this interesting, and well, funky. It's those wacky funsters from Looney Tunes, the old classics mind you, here to give you a brilliant alternative to Solitaire or Minesweeper.

The concept is simple, a desktop jigsaw puzzle designed to suit the whole family. Each image is taken from a classic Warner

Bros. cartoon, with Marvin the Martian and his dog K9, to Duck Dodgers in the 24th and a half Century. Choose between 5 difficulty levels and double sided pieces to truly frustrate and keep



you staring at your monitor until the wee hours of the night.

The feature of this puzzler that sets it apart is the automated cut-scenes. As soon as the last piece is slotted in, a clip from the car-



Cartoon classics chopped into pieces - can you put them together again?

toon the still has been taken from is launched. It's worth it just for the clip of Murray, the all singing all dancing frog. You can even set the images as desktop wallpaper.

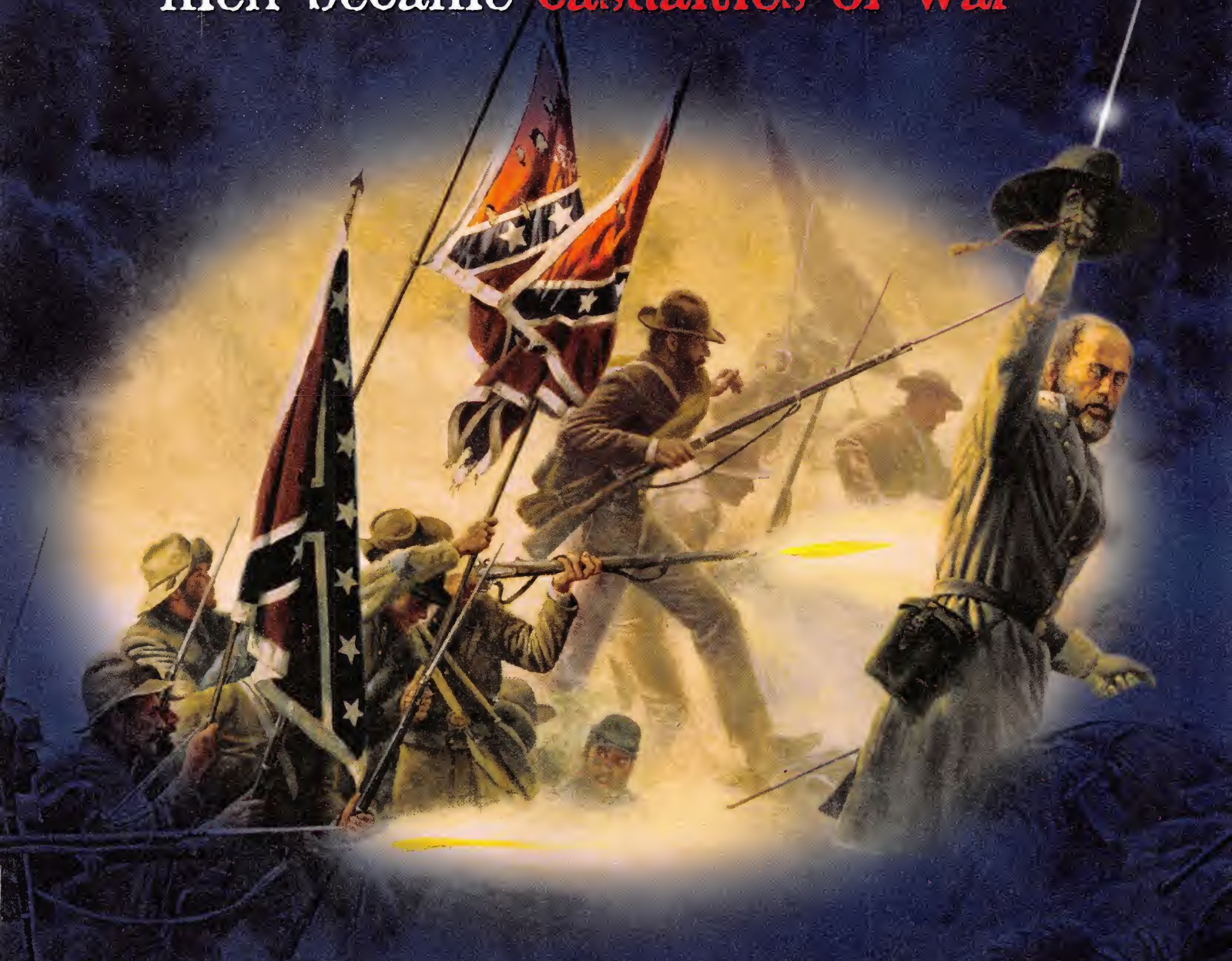
This game was designed with the kids at heart, and so has included a printable certificate of congratulations that can be coloured in. Level 1 cuts the image into obvious pieces so the

youngsters won't get discouraged, while level 5 cuts it into whatever it damn well pleases, from what looks like confetti to stars or diamonds. But never fear, a small photo is near! So you can always see where you are.

Surprisingly, it can really be a challenger, but once you've seen all the cut-scenes, it starts to lose its initial shine. But that doesn't mean it still isn't bright. So, be warned! Cosmic Capers is highly addictive.

Agata Budinska

On September 17, 1862 over **23,000**
men became **casualties of war**



Recreating this **bloodiest** day in American military history and other crucial battles of the "**War Between the States**", North vs. South is a cutting edge war simulation from one of the leaders in the industry, **Interactive Magic**.



www.imagicgames.com

NORTH vs. SOUTH



info@directsoft.com.au

WINDOWS® 95 CD-ROM STRATEGY GAME

North vs. South is a trademark and Interactive Magic is a registered trademark of Interactive Magic, Inc. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. ©Copyright 1998 Interactive Magic, Inc. All rights reserved. Detail from the original painting "Follow Me, Boys!" by Mort Künstler. ©Copyright 1994 Mort Künstler, Inc. Directsoft Pty Ltd holds the exclusive license to North vs South in the Pacific Rim.

BRITANNICA

Knowledge is power - and sometimes even fun too.

Developer: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc.
Rated: G
Need: Windows, Pentium, 16MB RAM
Want: P150, 32MB RAM, Internet Access
RRP: \$299

In the good old days, the arrival of the latest Encyclopedia set meant the entire neighbourhood celebrated with you. With party hats on and streamers flying, bearing gifts of Hungarian goulash and pickled jellies, people would come from all around town just to catch a glimpse of the newly acquired mighty tomes. The lucky family would be at the center of it all, carefully removing all the hard bound, brown leather books from the packing material and would be ceremoniously arranging them onto the neat little "Made-for-encyclopedia" style book case, that Pa had put together a couple of Sundays ago. Once arranged, the lucky family would then get a few rounds of "For they are golly good fellows, and so say all of us" before the raucous crowd would disperse, happier for being part of something special.

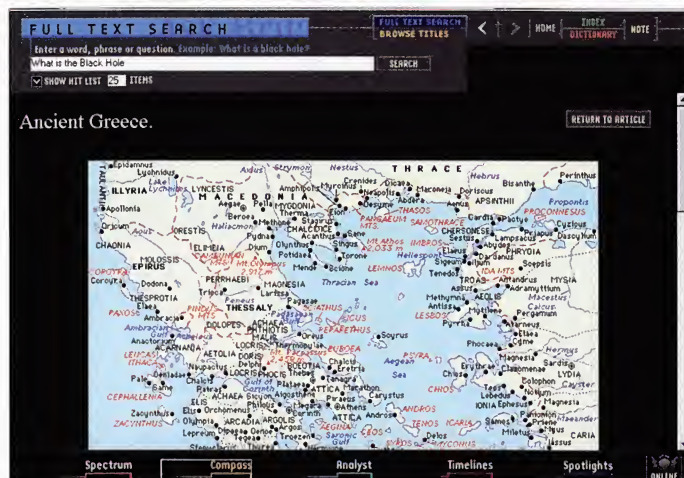
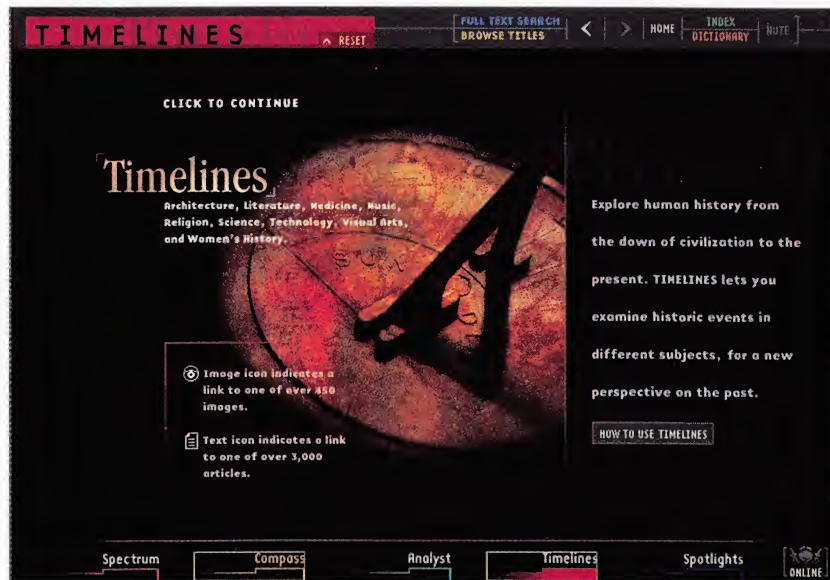
This all changed of course, after we got television, as did the general interest in volumes as rich in information as encyclopedias were. Other than the obvious reasons, they were just too cumbersome, and too damn expensive. In the age of PCs the buzz word is convenience, and if you want a good example of this grab two compact discs and stand them next to a pile of books stacked to a height of 150cm. Convenient? Check out the difference. The smaller one can hold more information than the other, too.

Okay, sure. The Encyclopedia CD-ROM set isn't actually a new concept, nor a very exciting one. This is mostly thanks to a lack of imagination employed by developers of such titles. If you don't present information in an interesting way, our short attention spans are just going to keep becoming shorter.

Encyclopedia Britannica have been doing the CD-ROM thing for some time now, and the 99 edition features several enhancements. Firstly, there are 1600 new articles included, as well as 450 new images and 15000 internet links. That brings the current features list now to:

- 73000 articles (1998 Yearbook included)
- 45 million words,
- 8500 photos and illustrations,
- Dynamic charts and tables, animations and videos
- 1200 interactive maps,
- 30000 internet links
- 1.5 million hyperlinks.
- The Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th Edition.

That's a heck of a lot info, and almost twice as much seen in any other multimedia encyclopedia. The real question is - just how easily is that information accessed? You can have four times as many pretty pictures as the nearest competitor and still be overlooked simply because navigating through the information was more a pain than a pleasure. Ency Britannica 99 features several search methods, the most useful being the Full Text Search function. You can ask the program a question in plain English - like "what is a quark?" for example, and get a list of articles relating to the subject of physics. This list will



Multimedia encyclopedias still don't contain quite enough depth of information to satisfy, but they're getting a lot better

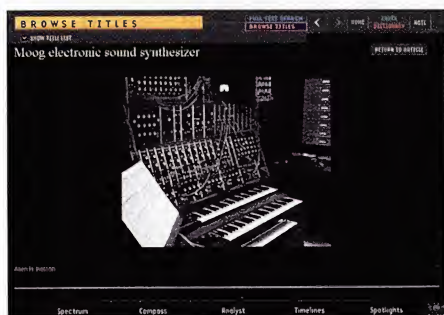
always be on hand in a pop-up window so that you can browse relating topics with ease (a session at the printed version often resulted with several books wide open with bookmarks a plenty looking for related links. The multimedia method is doesn't even compare). There is just one way the Enc Britannica package is let down regarding ease of access. As you browse through topics and bring up illustrations and the like, you'll be asked to insert the other disc of this two disc set. During your typical session, you may be asked to do this several times - which, after some time, becomes an intrusive annoyance.

The other question is for just who do you purchase a title like

this? Depth is lacking - university students (and most upper-high school students) will find that this encyclopedia fails to go into enough depth to be any major service. It is however, a great place to start and contains enough to keep young inquiring minds at bay. Ideally, titles such as Encyclopedia Britannica CD 99 are suited best for younger children and teenagers than any other age group, though people of all ages will find a use for it.

A slick and comprehensive encyclopedia package that contains a plethora of information that is easy to navigate through. I'm just waiting for the DVD versions now. Then we'll start seeing some information in real style.

March Stepnik



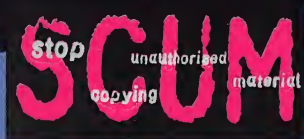
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DUNE 2000

STRATEGY GUIDE

There's a lot to Dune 2000. So much so that we don't even have room for an intro. On with the Strategy guide then.

SPOILER WARNING

These walkthroughs will reveal specific information regarding enemy position and tactics. Only read about missions you need help with else you will potentially ruin the game for yourself.

Note: Some missions give the player the choice of playfield from an overall map of Arrakis. These missions will start with information for the playfield titled by the compass position of the mission map from choices available on the Arrakis map.

ATREIDES MISSION WALKTHROUGHS

The first four missions are fairly straightforward, so we'll just get straight into the harder missions.

Mission 5

In this mission you have to rescue the Fremen that are being held in the far northwest corner of the Sietch Tabr. Your engineer must also reach the Harkonnen Barracks and capture it intact as well as capturing the Starport (which is a must to sur-

vive this mission).

Your starting point in this mission is at a good defensive rock formation. Only your base's left flank is exposed, so a combination of walls and turrets will protect you.

The Starport is directly north of you on a cliff. The Harkonnen Barracks are in the very far northeast corner of the map.

Start the mission by capturing the Starport which will give you an MCV. The clock ticking in the corner is the time you have left to intercept the smugglers' shipment.

Don't charge straight up. First build a good force of Trikes and Quads. At the six minute mark, you will receive reinforcements with a Combat tank. Head the forces towards the Starport to engage it. You will meet some Harkonnen resistance on the way up, but nothing too daunting. Meanwhile, send the Engineer around south and east to capture the spaceport with defensive units occupied.

Move your MCV to the middle of the starting rock formation by group-selecting your entire strike force and the MCV. Now,

DUNE 2000

move back by taking short steps. Use the units to form a wall to cover the MCV back to base.

Now, build a combination of units and walls around the northeast corner of your base. Make sure you mix a series of gun turrets in there as well. As you do this, place all your essential and vulnerable buildings (i.e. Outposts and Wind Traps) at the very rear of your base. The Barracks in question is Southwest so send a pair of Trikes to get a visual.

To destroy the Harkonnen, use a force of primarily combat and missile tanks. Once in sufficient numbers, send a group northeast and take out the Gun Turrets protecting the vulnerable western flank of the Harkonnen base.

For the final assault, create a large party of mixed tanks and a few Trikes/Quads with an engineer. Move them to the southeast corner of the map leaving a few units north of your base in case of an attack. Creep the primary force and the Engineers up until you reach the fortress.

Move your tanks into the base through the narrow west gate and form a line that holds off the Harkonnen forces to the southeast. Under the cover of this line, send the Engineer and a couple of escort Quads toward the Barracks. You will most likely lose a lot of units this way, but once the barracks is captured you win and don't need to destroy the entire base.

Mission 6

Destroy the Ordos base and the tarport

West Map

Here you start right of the lower center of the map. Further SE is a large bluff with one side raised and unscalable. While this is a smaller area to build on, it is far more defensible. Once you outgrow this base, you can always expand back on the starting area. The Ordos base and mercenaries are located in the entire northern region of the map with a large central base and two minibases on either side. The Starport is located in the NE corner.

East Map

Here you start in a small established base in the northeastern corner of the map where the Ordos are spread out all over. To the west is a mercenary camp which is quite isolated from the main Ordos base to the far south. The main base is spread across the bottom of the map with access points in the center and on both sides. The Starport is located in the SE corner.

Tips

Start by building up to launch a preemptive assault on the enemy Starport. On the eastern map, the Starport can be found in the southeastern corner. On the western map, it is located in the northeastern corner.

Simply put together a suicide squad of the best units you can build early in the game with an engineer. Send the entire patrol straight into the enemy base to cover the Engineer who takes over and sells the Starport. With their supply line cut, it's now just a matter of weathering the assault until the computers pre-established units are depleted.

Mission 7

Stop the Harkonnen from retreating and destroy them

You start this mission on a broad expanse of rock that allows for building a large base. It is however open on 3 sides making defense difficult. The Harkonnen are established in three places: a small camp in the northeast, a medium-sized fort in the middle of the map, and a huge base in the northwest corner.

The computer will attack you very quickly into this mission so scout as you're starting to produce your structures. In essence, treat this game like a multiplayer one. Once you successfully defend the initial onslaught, you will be given a small breather to further expand.

Next concentrate on capturing the central Harkonnen base and send an MCV up to build a Repair Pad, Barracks, and factories.



Tips

Five minutes into the mission you will receive an allotment of reinforcements. After five more minutes, Instead of the Harkonnen attacking, the Sardaukar (Imperial Soldiers), will attack you. Have fun with this, as foot soldiers they're all squishable. Their assault and missile tanks will follow so prepare for them.

Create a wall on the North side of the base with plenty of turrets and leave a small defense force on the eastern side.

When the Devastator Tanks come, try to draw them into any Rocket Turrets you have set up.

On to the eastern side of the map and a little North is a small Harkonnen camp. Destroy it first as reinforcements from the main base will come too late. Further north are some easily destroyed Wind Traps and a Refinery sitting alone in the desert. Repair your units after capturing the base, you will need them in good condition.

It's possible with a well placed air strike to continuously take out the central bases Heavy Factory which produces Devastators.

To attack the central base muster groups of foot soldiers

and tank combinations into the previously liberated base. Send armour in through the north and soldiers in through the front gate and use an Engineer to capture the Barracks.

At this stage, destroy any harvesters that venture close and continue to use air strikes. Before your final assault use air strikes to destroy the Wind Traps - with no power, rocket turrets won't function.

Use engineers to capture the construction yard and numerous wind traps.

Mission 8

Destroy all Ordos

You start in the northeast corner with borders on both sides for a supremely defensible position.

The Ordos are located in the southwest corner of the map. There is also a small and moderately defended Harkonnen base in the southeast and an even smaller Ordos Outpost in the middle of the map.

In this mission you will encounter numerous waves of attacks so once established, capture the Ordos base in the middle of the map and either take over their buildings or sell them.

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Mission 9 Destroy the combined Harkonnen and Imperial forces West mission

You start on two far-flung mini-bases. The northeastern installation is primarily a mining colony, the southeastern base for production. Each base has two access points with wide entryways into the heart of your

Next, capture the Harkonnen base in the southeast corner of the map making sure to use engineers to assume control of its production facilities.

Tips

Use siege and missile tanks to plow through turrets and missile turrets. Capture as many buildings as possible, then consider carefully what you need. More buildings require more power. Keep only what aids you.

Amass a large group of missile and Siege Tanks to lead the assault on the Harkonnen mini-base. Group sonic tanks separately so you can use them to attack from a different location. This will stop problems with friendly fire.

Use air strikes to take out power to the Rocket Turrets and use Siege Tanks on both the rocket and Gun Turrets. Squish remaining Harkonnen foot soldiers and again use engineers to take control of all the buildings. Capture the Heavy Factory for the ability to build the Devastator Tank. Use the captured Harkonnen base as the new primary for the final assault.

To destroy the final Ordos base, use air strikes to knock out as much power as possible to deactivate the Rocket Turrets. Be wary of the Deviator Tanks, which turns your units against you. Send in a large force of Trikes to fire on these units and separate them from the battle. Having Trikes turned against you won't cause any problems.

operations. Seal them.

The Harkonnen are located in the middle East and middle West. The eastern base has a heavily covered wall to the south and a negligibly defended gate to the north. The western base has an overpoweringly defended gate in the south and one moderately covered in the north.

The Imperial base is located in the northeast corner and has a tough entrance to the south and a lightly defended one to the west over a narrow bridge with access to the Imperial production facilities.

East mission

Don't do it!

Tips

This mission starts you with a basic array of buildings. Unfortunately, they are not well-grouped or, by any standard, complete. With this in mind, you may want to consider selling some to rebuild.

Start this mission by taking over the nearest and least-defended Harkonnen base as quickly as possible - immediately, if you dare. The trick to this mission is to keep moving your base with every conquest. The size of the map is so huge that it makes the campaign easier to manage.

All the bases are very well powered, so sniping at Wind Traps is a waste of time. Instead, deprive your enemies of their top weapons. Use air strikes whenever possible to debilitate Heavy Factories halting the production of Devastator Tanks.

One very effective tactic is to send a squad of Engineers with a small Trike/Trooper escort to take over the Imperial Palace. This will give you the ability to build Sardaukar troopers.

The minor bases aren't particularly well-defended, instead they're well-powered. Try to take over Heavy Factories to gain the ability to build Devastator Tanks.

HARKONNEN MISSION WALKTHROUGHS

Again, the early missions are a small challenge, but you shouldn't encounter too many problems. At around mission 5 though, things get a bit hairy.

Mission 5

Protect the Outpost at Habbanya o prevent Imperial interference

You begin this mission at a tiny base in the east of the map. Directly below you is the Outpost you must protect. The south approach is easily defended, your north however is very open and prone to attack.

The Ordos are located in a small base directly to the south and in the northeast corner. The smaller base is vulnerable on

both sides in the rear, but a Gun Turret defends the eastern side.

Tips

The best way to attack the Ordos base is either through a foot approach in the southwest corner, or through the lightly defended northern approach.

In this mission you have to move very quickly. Build a Barracks immediately south of the Construction Yard and construct the remainder of your base as near as possible to the Outpost. Fortify the southern portion of the base and as a secondary action the north.

Seal off the Outpost with walls, then develop as many Turrets as time allows. Take you sole Combat Tank to the Outpost and, when the final reinforcements arrive, send two of those Tanks to join it. The Ordos will airlift in there assault and will be intense so try and lure enemy units to the turrets.

Next, overtake the Ordos camp to the south making sure to capture buildings to cheaply expand your base. Keep building for defense until you have enough units for an assault.

After the third delivery of reinforcements, a large force of foot troops will attack from the southern Ordos base. Go on a squishing rampage. Subsequent attacks will come equally from the south base and airlifted troops from the eastern base.



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Mission 6

Locate the Ordos Starport and destroy or capture it

West map

You start in the southwest of the map with north and east sides exposed. There is plenty of open space for all the buildings you will need in this mission, including walls.

To your east is a neutral base. Above you is a small Ordos base with basic production facilities and good defense. The main base sits in the northeast corner of the map and is extremely well-fortified. There are only footpath entrances so use engineers whilst mechanised units are engaged.

East map

You start with an easily defendable formation with only small access passes in the southeast and southwest corners. Directly to the north is a neutral base with Spice reserve.

In the northwest corner, there's a well-defended base with access points to the south. The main base is in the northeast corner of the map and is open to attack.

You should treat this map offensively rather than defensively. Start by taking over the small Ordos base and capturing structures to increase output.

Tips

Remember that you don't need to level the huge Ordos base, you only need to destroy (or capture and sell) the Starport before the Deviators arrive.

Take the neutral base at your first reasonable opportunity using an engineer to take the Refinery and receive the base's Spice. Taking over the Refinery will automatically bring down the rest of the base. Have your own silos ready to receive the stolen spice.



Mission 7

Destroy the Atreides High Tech Factory

For this mission you will start on a large rock formation for what will need to be a gigantic base. The northern flank of your base is secure, but there is a footpath on the southeastern side of your base that troops can sneak in through. The weakest flank is the southwest corner.

To the west is a small Atreides base and a gigantic one to the east. The smaller base can be breached easily through the northern gateway but it takes a roundabout trip to get there. To destroy the large eastern base, it is necessary to enter from the south.

Tips

Build very quickly. Immediately take over the Atreidian Construction Yard and be prepared for constant assaults from the east and west. Build walls with turrets and rockets to secure yourself quickly especially on the eastern side as the CPU will try and engineer you early on then continue to attack there.

Start by conquering the base to the west. Send your force north and west to enter the unprotected northern approach. Destroy the turrets and then the Wind Traps. Capture the Spice Silos and Refinery for more cash then return to your base.

Mission 8

Destroy the Ordos

This mission places you in the southeast corner of the map upon a wide plain. The northern border is exposed as is the western side. There is a small Mercenary Camp to the northwest and a well fortified Atreides base further northwest with possible approaches for foot soldiers to the northeast and southern sides. A Rocket-Turret guarded gateway in the southeast is exposable if wind traps are destroyed. The large Ordos base has openings on the southeast, north and east sides.

Start by walling in the northern flank of your base, using as many Gun Turrets as you can afford. Build Wind Traps to the south to protect them. Keep your Heavy and High Tech Factory as far away from the edges of the base as possible and use Rocket Turrets to fend off Atreidian air strikes.

Tips

The CPU will start with numerous small attacks whilst you are trying to establish yourself. Be particularly careful of Saboteurs who attempt to sneak in from the north. If they destroy your Construction Yard, restart the mission.

As soon as the yellow Mercenary force attacks destroy them and immediately counter



attack their base to take over the Heavy Factory with an Engineer. Start fortifying this base as the Atreides will launch a large-scale assault on it quickly. If the Atreides assault overwhelms you, sell their buildings for cash.

Attack the Ordos from behind with as many Deviators as is affordable. Focus on destroying the Wind Traps but capture the Heavy Factory and IX Research (if not already destroyed) to produce Deviators. Continue to destroy or capture the rest of the base to win the mission. It's not actually necessary to touch the Atreides.

Mission 9

Destroy the Emperor's base then turn on the Atreides and annihilate them

North map

The final mission is difficult enough, the southern sector is easier.

South map

For the final mission you start at the northwest corner of the map with a Construction Yard. North and western flanks



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are protected but the southern and eastern borders are open.

In the far southeast corner is a Mercenary Base with a refinery. In the northeastern corner is an Atreides base that can be breached through the west or over a land bridge from the Mercenary base. In the dead center of the map is the Imperial compound with all entrances defended.

Start the mission by quickly building the best defenses you can afford. You will need an auto defending home base as you will be constantly assaulted by both enemies.

Tips

To get a construction yard, upgrade the already existing factory and produce an MCV.

When you're ready to assault start by attacking the Imperial Base. Clear the left portion first, then proceed to the main part of the base and take over the Construction Yard and Spice Refinery.

As soon as you attack however, your own base will be assaulted, so make sure your auto defenses are in order. Make sure you take out the Imperial bases Wind traps to disable the Rocket Turrets.

Capture as many buildings as possible and build up a new strike force to proceed south and decimate the Mercenary base. To complete the mission, march up the land bridge to the final Atreides base. This southern entrance is the easiest to breach and once inside the Atreides will yield quickly.

ORDOS MISSION WALKTHROUGHS

Straight on to mission 5 once again

Mission 5

Mine 25,000 credits worth of spice

In this mission you start outside the walls of a small Atreides base with a Starport. Start by taking the Starport and wind traps to assume control of the base.

Tips

As you only have to collect spice, it is not necessary to build an offensive force. Simply produce numerous mining and defensive structures/units.

Aim for three Harvesters and two Carryalls to speed up mining and don't forget to build silos or you won't be able to meet your mission goal.

Mission 6

Defend the Starport until the arrival of the Ixian weaponry

West Map

On this map you start in two places. Your main base sits in the northeast corner of the map walled, with basic structures and protected by twin Gun Turrets. To your south is a small base that consists of only your Starport which is very open and hard to defend.

To the Northwest is an Atreides base and a Harkonnen installation. The Atreides base has an entrance to the South and the Harkonnen base is accessible via a single Rocket Turret through the western entrance.

East

This map is easier and places you in a large walled base in the center of the map. The Starport is located inside and to your east. To the north is a large Atreides base with its easiest entrance to the west. The Harkonnen base is in the southeastern corner with all entrances heavily defended.

As you have to defend the Starport, concentrate on placing automated defenses around it. You will have to work fast and ensure that your base is fully ready for battle by the time the Starport delivery arrives.

Tips

The timer you see is an indicator to the arrival of the first shipment of Deviators which occurs in 30 minutes. Take note of this because just before the delivery arrives you will be massively assaulted by both Houses simultaneously.

Even after the delivery arrives you need to continue to protect the Starport if it is destroyed, your mission will fail.

Mission 7

Fight with the mercenaries to conquer your enemy

These Missions are some of the most interesting in Dune 2000 because you work with an allied AI. You and the mercenaries begin in the upper northwest corner of the map with poor defenses to the north and the south. Wall up these areas but remember to leave small openings so the Mercenaries can come and go.

To the south of your position is an enemy base consisting mainly of Wind Traps. The main entrance to the base is from the east where there are three Gun Turrets to defend it and an armoured regiment which once destroyed is not replenished.

The second base is directly east and can be entered from the west but has Gun and Rocket Turrets defending it. The third base is in the northeast corner of the map and is the Emperor's compound. The best entrance to the base is by destroying the northwest Gun Turret and coming in through the wall.



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Harkonnen base is in the southeastern corner of the map and can be entered easiest from the west. The final base is in the northeastern corner. It's an Atreides and is easiest accessed from the northwest.

Tips

Build your Refinery to the South (and wall it off when you can build Carryalls). It's important to use a number of automated defenses as the Mercenaries will attack when they're ready and the retaliation will hit your base. Use Rocket Turrets inside the base to defend from air strikes.

The Mercenaries add an interesting element to the Ordos Mission as they dictate when and where you attack. They're not master strategists but are quite capable of occupying the enemy forces while you mount more focused attacks. Don't let the Mercenaries march to their deaths as if their casualties are too great, you will lose the mission.

Mission 8

Support the mercenaries to destroy the Atreides

Here you start in the northwest corner of the map with the mercenaries in the top portion. Your southern flank is entirely exposed with defenses needing to be added to the northeastern and southeastern areas. One of the more interesting aspects of this map is that Mercenaries will build and wall up any exposures they see.

An Imperial base sits in the middle of the eastern side with one entrance to the south. The

Tips

Very quickly into the game two airlifted assaults will occur and then you'll be given a fairly long interval to build. The Mercenaries to the north will continue to build their own strike force, so don't get in their way.

You can let the Mercenaries take the first few strikes alone if you don't feel ready, but after that, you will have to give them some help or they will be defeated and you will lose the mission.

When the mercenaries assault the Atreides base, take out as many wind traps (on the west of the base) as possible to shut down Rocket Turrets which will reduce their losses.

Mission 9

Destroy the remaining houses

West map

Don't do it.

East

For this, the final campaign you're placed in the northwest corner of the map in a highly defensible position with only small openings to the south and east. The allied Mercenary base is directly to the south and is well-powered and fully functional with a Starport and Heavy Factory.

Directly east of the Mercenary base is the primary Imperial fortress, which is attacked easiest

from the east. To the southeast of the Imperial base is the Atreides base. The best attack route is from the north.

Using Engineers on this installation is the best way. Finally in the southwest is the Harkonnen base, it's best entrance is through a footpath in the south.

Tips

Build fast, and be impenetrable to attack. You will almost immediately be attacked so try to use the Mercenaries as cover

When you're ready for an assault, head first to the Imperial base. Use Missile Tanks to fire on the Wind Traps from outside and when it's low on power, enter the base through the southeast entrance and take over more wind traps. Once powered down, it's easy to destroy.

The next base to destroy should be the Atreides one. Start by clearing the northern area and then move east and take out the wind traps to disable the Rocket Turrets and capture the palace to enlist the Fremen.

Finish the mission by destroying the Harkonnen base. Use a team of Saboteurs up the footpath to take out the Turrets and then the palace. Also use saboteurs under cover of a tank attack to destroy Rocket Turrets. Raze the base and finally your mission is complete.

Miscellaneous tactics

The Semi circle of death

This strategy will work with any type of unit except infantry. Use 10 of any sturdy unit. Say 5 tanks and 5 missile tanks then move to the nearest chokepoint. Align the units into a rough semi-circle and like lemmings, the enemy will wander in and get blown to bits.

Support Infantry with armour

10 troopers are very cost effective and are like having 10 quads, only squishable. Keep them alive by creating a wall of armour they can hide behind.

Use the AI against itself

This tactic is less strategic and simply uses the AI against itself. Plan an ambush for your enemy by having two forces. One a small, fast force (Quads or Trikes) and a larger slower force (Tank, foot soldiers and Rocket Tanks). Take the heavy units and use the semicircle tactic at a bottleneck or other advantageous terrain. When ready use the fast units to attack a harvester and retreat/lure to the aforementioned fortified area which you have prepared.

The AI which always responds to losing a harvester with a massive attack which you lure to your ambush. A static force will always prevail over a moving one due to movement disorganization and terrain constraints.

Bug exploit - Free Harvester

When fighting the Ordos, let your Harvester be turned by the deviator tanks. When your Harvester is turned against you (only for a short while), you'll get a replacement Harvester. Remember to check up on the Harvester, once it turns back, get it mining for you again.

Deviators rule supreme

Always group Deviators separately because of their weakness. Engage enemy forces with heavy armour and with the battle in swing group select your Deviators and target the heaviest enemy unit, by bringing the Deviators in late, they are ignored in an established firefight and re-targeting puts the enemy units at a disadvantage. This tactic also works well in multiplayer.

When fighting the Harkonnen always target the Deviators and when captured self destruct those puppies for heavy enemy losses. Deviators also work well on siege tanks, depleting the enemy of their anti infantry ability.

Natural Base Defenses

The Blue movement cursor for troops is signifies rocky terrain. Put squads of rocket and infantry men in the rocks and they're totally unsquishable and devastating against armour.

HALF-LIFE

PLAYGUIDE

All the info you need to survive this modern day-apocalypse!

Half-Life is one of the coolest games coming out this year, and it's gameplay is a big part of that. Ranging methods of dealing with situations, from brute force to clever manipulation are all part and parcel of the experience. It's up to you how to play, but you will be much more successful if you take some time to think about things as you progress.

After the introduction, explore the laboratories fully, as the more familiar you are, the easier it will be to escape later on. Talk to everybody. Apart from healing you, which the scientists can do, or helping you in combat like the security guards do, some of them open areas you would not otherwise gain access to.

On the way out of the complex, head upwards at every opportunity. Check all security guard's bodies for ammunition, and keep your eyes peeled for items. Avoid anything that sparks, lights up, or otherwise makes sharp noises. Don't try to fight anything until you get a weapon. You simply can't!

Once you get the crowbar, you'll find it handy for getting through windows and through grilles into the air conditioning system. Don't rely on it though. You'll still need to press the occasional switch! Not quite everything is destructible.

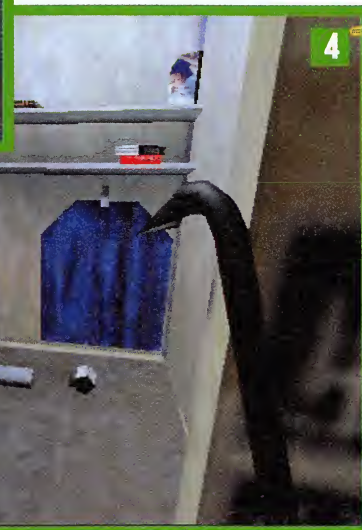
Remember to use the environment to your advantage during combat. Half-Life is not Quake!, you have a lot more options available to you than you probably expect! Especially explosive containers, which can save you a lot of trouble. Carefully observing your surroundings will often yield

superior results and strategies. You have to get over the Quake

theory of glancing at the contents of a room once, and making snap decisions. Tricky looking things usually have a tricky little function, which you can figure out. You'll also want to press pretty much all the switches you come across, as they normally drive access to other areas, so you don't want to miss any of them! The only exception is the "fire lockdown" doors, which will shut permanently once triggered.



computer room scientists will authorise the exit door (which is locked with a retinal scanner) (**fig 1**) for you. Talk to the one consoling his friend who has an injured hand (**fig 2**), as you can't proceed until they unlock that door.



Part 1: Anomalous Materials Lab

Go and get the environment suit, then attend the experiment in the test chamber. Be careful not to fall off the balcony when you climb up there to switch on the fans. Then push the specimen carefully into the anti-mass spectrometer, don't fall in! On the way out, talk to all the survivors you find. For instance the

HALF-LIFE



Leave the first headcrab you see well alone. You can come back and get him with the crowbar later, if you really want revenge. If you need health, the First-Aid boxes (**fig 3**) fixed to the walls all over the place will dispense a good 40% or so when used. Remember their locations for when you get injured. There are also orange HEV energy dispensers which power up your suit in much the same way.

Go back and check your locker, you will find a HEV suit battery there. (**Fig 4**)

Now make your way back to the front desk of the A.M. lab, and crawl into the open grille that leads into the Server room (**fig 5**). You now have to jump onto the fallen computers, and jump through to get to the Air conditioning duct near the roof (**fig 6**).

The next few rooms are self-explanatory, you will come through armed with Glock pistol and crowbar. Several zombies must be dispatched before you

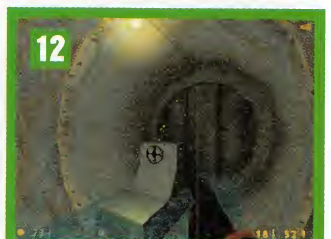
can proceed. Upon entering the next area, you will be confronted by a few Houndeyes, who should be no problem to put to sleep with your pistol. When you have done this, take the first left doorway (**fig 6**), then climb up the ladder. You will be confronted by a zombie with two accompanying headcrabs (**fig 7**). If you have any bullets left, it is much easier to shoot past the monsters into the gas containers behind them which will explode. Taking a right, you will find a lost scientist (**fig 8**). Get him to follow you, then walk back to the gas container room, and take the other corridor out of there. In the room that follows, kill the zombie by shooting another gas canister that the zombie will walk past. Defend the scientist with your life! If you succeed, he will operate the retinal scanner and give you access to a room (**fig 9**) packed with health, grenades and ammo. The grenades are quite necessary if



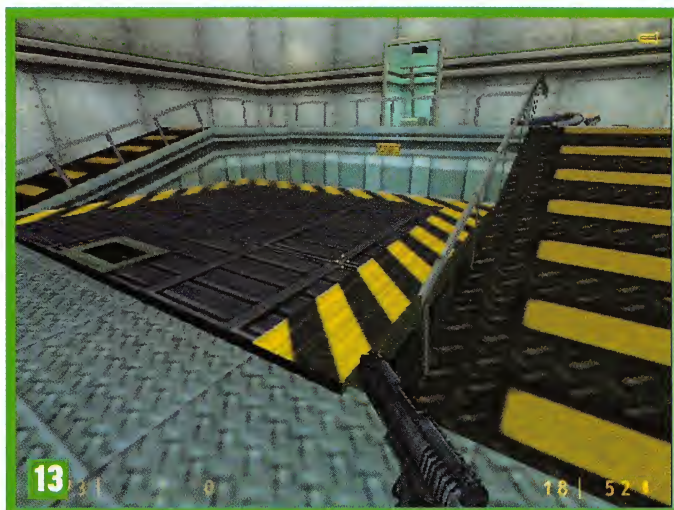
you want any chance of survival, so this whole process is worthwhile, if only for that alone.

Continue back into the main area after looting the goods, and take the other unexplored corridor remaining. Be prepared for a fight here, as an alien drone will bust through the wooden door facing you, and start shooting lightning bolts! Take him out, then you will

see a grate (**fig 10**) with a manhole in the floor in front of it. There is a cheeky zombie on the other side. Shoot him dead, then peeking carefully into the manhole, and snipe the headcrab waiting in ambush (**fig 11**). Dive down into the pipes system. To get out, you need to locate the water valve (**fig 12**) which will flood the system with water. Swim with the



HALF-LIFE



water level, and come out one of the two twin manholes, that open onto the zombie side of the grate. You're through!

Walk along to the next room, which is a gargantuan cargo lift (**fig 13**). Collect the ammo off the dead guard, click the big lever, then quickly jump onto it! It will start rolling downhill at a rate of knots. Be on high alert as it descends, as headcrabs will come skittering down from above by the tens. One wrong foot here will see you falling to a very sudden death.

As you near the bottom, wait at the left hand side of the lift, so that you can get off early, at a nice little secret platform with extra health (**fig 14**). Cruising into the next room, your walkway will be smashed by a heavy monster that suddenly appears, high in the air (**fig 15**). Navigate

around the edge of the room jumping along the pipes, then when you reach the other side, smash the grille next to the wall (**fig 16**) and find your way down.

Upon reaching the lowest point, you should enter an open area next to a waterway (**fig 17**). Take out the Bullsquid on the other side with your pistol, avoiding his acid spray and also the tendrils of the barnacles above you! Having done that, you can visit a health box on the far right, then walk to the far left and dive in the water, going through the obvious

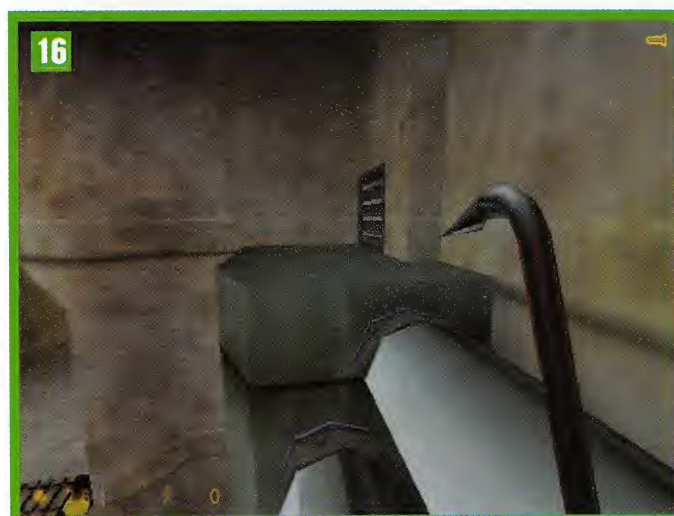


slots in the wall there. You will emerge on the other side, walk to the middle of the room and go through the door there, behind the dead Bullsquid. You will have to jump precariously down a series of hanging cargo containers (**fig 18**). Do this very carefully. A good strategy is to jump so that you will hit the cable in the centre, stopping you from skidding over the edge. Having done that, follow the skinny corridors and you will come through to a nice, spacious elevator. Congratulations, you have completed section one!

Part 2: Office Complex

Upon leaving the lift, you will see a light fitting in the roof

forms that an electrical barrier that you cannot cross (**fig 19**), you must crawl into the nearby vent at floor level after smashing the grille with the crowbar, and crawl back the way you came. Once there, you can gain access to a small room with the controls for the local power grid (**fig 20**). Shut it off, and you can proceed. The next room down the hall is a lab room that's completely wrecked, with water running everywhere (**fig 21**). Don't go in there yet, go to the left through a whole bunch of wooden boxes. Mash them with your crowbar - careful, there's a headcrab in there somewhere. Then you will find the Shotgun in the next room, lying conveniently on a



HALF-LIFE



con ducts, be very careful to duck under a big fan you will encounter. The alternative to ducking is, well, it's a whole lotta giblets. Upon exiting, you will come across a few headcrabs. Waste them, then you need to drag two containers together to make a makeshift stairway so you can grab a ladder in the roof (**fig 24**). Going through there, break through a few more grilles, then you will be in a room with a live sentry gun in it.

It will happily sit there killing things that walk in. You might be inclined to blow it up straight-away, but hold off for a moment - you can utilise it's services to make life a bit easier for yourself. Walk dead ahead out of the shaft into the facing corridor, and stir up the ten or so lurking headcrabs in there. Then run back out, and bear right, going into the corridor opposite. The crabs should follow you hungrily, and get chewed by the sentry gun. While you are in that little dead-end zone, gather the bits and pieces of

ammo in there, then you can run straight on through where the headcrabs were, or take out the gun. It's up to you, really. In the next room, you start ascending some big starcases. Be very careful coming up the first flight, as a sentry gun high on the room behind will open fire immediately (**fig 26**). This one you really need to take apart. Shoot it until it blows up, or if you have grenades, use those. Then continue upwards, being wary of the headcrabs that lurk on the landings.

When you exit the stairs, go down the ramp you will see a Bullsquid guarding a stockpile of grenades and ammo (**fig 27**). Take him out, because you will need the goods for later on. Now go back up, and you have this open area where zombies are slowly gutting dead scientists (**fig 28**). You want to use the crowbar here to smash those wooden planks blocking up the exit. Run straight in and do that, because a virtual hail of headcrabs comes falling down as



palate. Now run forward, and shoot the zombie attacking the security guard on the other side of the wire fence. If you succeed, the guard will let you in for a big ammo reload (**fig 22**).

Now back to the smashed, watery Lab. The water in the room has an electrical current running through it, from another smashed light fitting. You can

carefully walk along the tops of the benches and switch it off at the back of the room. Now you can proceed through the grille in the wall at head height (**fig 23**). Careful, though, that vent is inhabited by headcrabs! Use your flashlight (press f) to spot them, and shoot them before they can get close enough to hurt.

Proceeding through the air-

HALF-LIFE



using the ladders, to the top of the elevator caboose itself. Use the crowbar to break through the grille in the ceiling, and you've completed section 2! Whoohoo!

There are not many "sticking points" where players get trapped in Half-Life, it's designed not to do that in many ways. Basically, if you kill everything first, then explore your surroundings, the way through should become apparent - there's always a way out. Follow these basic guidelines, and you'll make it to the surface. After that it really gets weird. The whole game completely changes tack, and just gets cooler still. Stay tuned for our second Half-life Playguide next month!

Ed Dawson



soon as you disturb them.

The next area is a huge cold storage room (**fig 29**). There are two Bullsquids and a handful of headcrabs here, so be ultra careful. You can use the door switches to close several linked gates in the fridge area, so you can lock monsters away if you don't nec-

essarily want to fight them (but that's no fun!). When it's clear, find this switch (**fig 30**), flick it, then climb up the ladder in the entry part. Climb along the tops of the shelves until you can crawl across the cargo lift into the hole near the roof (**fig 31**).

Following that, climb through

this part of the roof, over the metal ducts (**fig 32**), then there are a few simple flights of stairs, and a tricky jump into a lift shaft (**fig 33**). Climb around the outside of the shaft,

HALF-LIFE

THE WEAPONS

Conventional Weapons

CROWBAR: It's great for opening crates, smashing grilles & self defence in air conditioning vents. It's not too shabby as a weapon either, if ammo is low. It's a good tool to have on "hot shuffle" with the weapon you like to use. If you think you can smash something to get somewhere new, this is the tool to test the theory.

GLOCK PISTOL: This is standard issue for your security guard buddies. The primary fire mode is more accurate, while the secondary fire mode repeats super fast for close and nasty confrontations.

Headcrabs will take three shots from a glock before rolling over.

MAGNUM 44 PISTOL: This baby is a gold mine. Save this for special occasions, as you will need it's stopping power in testing times. If you can hit a US Marine in the head with the Magnum, you will put him down for good - one shot kill. Needless to say, one hit to a headcrab will give it a permanent digestive disorder, a bad case of the cramps and generally ruin their day.

SHOTGUN: The shotty is the stalwart weapon for the lower levels. It's suited for any target, save those requiring a very large amount of munitions to be pumped into them. The secondary double-blast has more kill power than both shells individually fired, which is great for knocking out zombies and alien drones, provided you hit them square. You have to be careful though, that you don't run out of ammo mid-battle, doing the "reload dance" as it is called in Team Fortress circles. The Shotgun can only hold eight shells, and they're manually loaded!

MP-5 SUBMACHINEGUN: This is the gun the Marines are equipped with. It has a quick rate of fire, has a nice accuracy over distance, and it's the weapon of choice when fight-

ing a team of enemies, as you can keep a fairly constant stream of ammo going with the big magazine (30 rounds). It's very quick to reload, so you can keep fighting. This gun's secondary fire mode is the ultimate Marine-killer. It's a short range grenade launcher, which spells instant death if you can gauge where your shots are going. Very powerful.

HAND GRENADES: Finally, we have some realistic modelling of explosives. The vertical angle you choose when throwing determines how far they will go, from baseball pitches to nicely dropping it on the floor. If you can see the grenade when it goes off, there's a good chance you'll be injured, if not killed. A good policy is to never hang around to see if your throw was perfect. Hock it and run! Naturally, this is the ultimate weapon when facing a large number of foes in a condensed area. You must be careful of the primer time - never hold a grenade for more than about half a second, because for some reason they will go off as soon as you let go of the handle, if you delay any longer.

SATCHEL CHARGES: These are essentially the same as grenades except that you cannot throw them very far at all, and use a radio switch to set them off. They also have a massive blast radius and, er, you'll be dead. Stand well back from these, yessir.

PROXIMITY MINES: These are most useful against the Marines and other smart foes, but you have to set them up in a way that is not completely obvious. They will not willingly walk into them, but you can set them at foot level and then cause them to panic, or let them advance with confidence. They will run very fast to get where they are going, probably through the mine. Slower moving enemies are much less likely to be fooled, unfortunately.

SHOTGUN



MP-5



HAND GRENADE



CROSSBOW



GLOCK



PROXIMITY MINE



SATCHEL CHARGE



CROSSBOW



HALF-LIFE

THE BESTIARY

Conventional Enemies

HEADCRABS: These horrid little beasts, despite their size, are actually one of the most dangerous things you will encounter. They attack by springing toward you without warning, from a distance of something like five metres. After they land you have up to two seconds before they reorient and leap again. If you are surrounded by a swarm of headcrabs, run away until you have some breathing space, so you can then pick them off as they advance. The damage they do is not to be sneezed at.

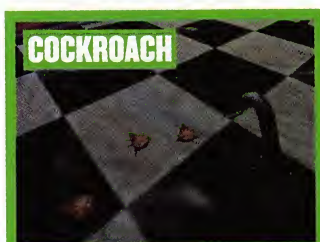
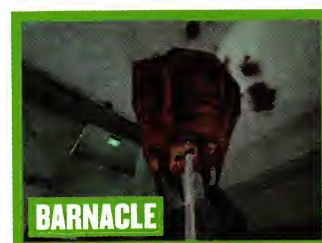
ZOMBIES: These guys are unfortunate science lab personnel who were "headcrabbed". They move quite slowly and only have slashing attacks with their mutated spindly arms. You can quite comfortably take them out with the crowbar, but you must be sure you avoid their attack. It packs a punch!

HOUNDEYES: These weird alien dogs with fly-eyes attack by generating a harmonic soundwave that will damage things inside its radius (about two metres). You can anticipate this attack from the rising chord that they make beforehand. As the sound reaches its peak, they fire the soundwave. Houndeyes are not particularly dangerous, as they have no other attack, and die quite easily.

BULLSQUIDS: These heavy beasts are pure agro. Spitting acid at a distance, biting savagely with their manipulating teeth and tentacles, then delivering a savage kick with their tail, they are not to be toyed with. Try to pepper them from a distance, and don't fight them face to face! They are pretty much blind, if you crawl slowly they will not hear you. They also hate headcrabs more than they hate you, so take advantage of this fact.

BARNACLES: These air-dwelling limpets stick to the roof and extend a long sticky cord. Things get stuck to the cord, the barnacle eats 'em. You can save the lives of science personnel who are getting trawled in by shooting the barnacle body before they get there. They are harmless until you get stuck to a sticky thing, then as you are reeled in like a fish. Try to shoot them on the way up or swing madly with the crowbar (but beware the drop back to the ground once you kill them...). If they bite your head, it's all over! One crowbar hit will kill them, though.

SENTRY GUNS: These automated tools of destruction are to be absolutely respected. Encased in solid steel, they take all kinds of punishment before they stop functioning. Your best bet is either to use grenades or the Glock. You typically have about half a second of visual contact before they start firing, enough time to bob up and do something aggressive. They also have more trouble hitting moving targets (read:



people running for their lives). Run across their field on vision, not toward or away from them as you will present a harder target this way.

ALIEN DRONES: These foot soldiers of the enemy are not too tough to wax, but their lightning attacks should be avoided at all times! You get about one second of visual before lightning comes your way. Enough time to deliver a Shotgun double-blast, which will kill them nine times out of ten.

US MARINES: These are the bastards. Called in by the Government, their job is to "clean" the entire facility of anything breathing. Armed with MP-5's and grenades, they work with deadly precision. Creating cross-fires, covering each other and advancing aggressively, they must be treated with the utmost respect. Magnum rounds, Shotgun double blasts and MP-5 launched

grenades are all very good ways of dropping Uncle Sam's minions, especially when picking on one soldier at a time, but stay wired! You will often get a surprise grenade bouncing quietly in behind you while you are rattling off automatic gunfire. BOOM! They are also very unpredictable, seeming to almost never do the same thing twice. As a result there's no sure fire way of taking them out. These guys are the prime example of computer game AI as it exists today.

COCKROACHES: Harmless, shy of light, and go crunch in the dark.

TIPS & TACTICS

Hints and tips for all the hard bits

ULTIMA ONLINE

★ When starting a new character, never use the predefined templates, instead always chose 45 Str, 10 Dex and 10 Int. As you play the game, you will find that all the other attributes will surpass strength very quickly.

★ When it's time to select skills, don't chose 3, instead set the least useful skill (such as begging) to 0. Then chose 50 Magery and 50 Hiding.

★ Those inexperienced with the game think that a combat skill needs to be chosen, but this could not be further from the truth. To raise combat skills very quickly, simply buy a bow (archery is the best for combat) and some small orange chests from a provisioner.

★ Try and purchase a recall scroll and a rune to Dungeon Deceit from a vendor plus enough reagents to cast recall (you will fail a few times even at 50 Magery).

★ If you can get to Deceit run as fast as you can to level 2 where the skeletons are. Now attack them and hide behind the main hall archway. The skeletons will not be able to hit you and your archery will go up at a phenomenal rate until about 80.

★ If you can't get to Deceit, the orange chests make for great barricades. Find a dungeon and when a monster attacks you, or you attack a monster, lay down the chests so that they can't get to you. Attack them with your bow to raise stats.

★ Finally, if you have a friend that can cast the blade spirit spell, get him to cast it in a corner and trap it with orange chests. Now attack it with your bow, your skills will raise as if you were attacking a dragon.

WARLORDS III

★ In some scenarios, the enemy heroes will start out with significant advantages (especially the distance they can move per turn). This allows them to explore a larger number of Ruins, so quest early and often.

WOODEN SHIPS & IRON MEN

★ Firing directly into the stern or bow of opposing ships is called a rake. Raking fire is by far the most effective combat option in the game. Try for these types of strikes whenever possible. Be careful though as you could take critical damage while waiting for the perfect broadside.



★ If you end up grappling an opponent's ship be sure to allocate a portion of your crew for boarding parties. While all crew are counted in the melee, those assigned to boarding parties will be twice as effective as the rest of the crew.

A-10 TANK KILLER 2

★ Fly the Training Mission. In training no one shoots at you, and you get the opportunity to attack a variety of targets. It's also an excellent environment to create custom loadouts and test the effectiveness of different weapons. Different weapons have different advantages, don't just use Mavericks and Sidewinders.

★ SAM radar can't detect you through hills or mountains. The lower you fly, the closer they must be to detect you and the shorter time they have to fire.

★ Slowing down over a target may seem more dangerous, but sometimes going a bit slower may let you hit all of your targets in one pass actually lowering the time you spend in the enemy's sights.

★ When you're about 7 kilome-



ters from your target, slow down to a throttle setting of 4 or 5, line up the target. For tanks use MAVericks, ROCkeyes, or AVengers. For light vehicles, anything but Sidewinders. For structures, use Mk 82, Mk 84s or FAEs for larger ones. NAPalm works great on bunkers, grounded aircraft or munitions.



ORACLE

There's nothing he doesn't know. About games, anyway

There has been too much violence...too much pain. None here is without sin, least of all myself. But I have an honourable compromise. Send me your gaming questions and I'll spare your lives. Just send them in and I will give you safe passage through the wasteland. Tell me where you are stuck and there will be an end to the horror. The horror...



Write to the Oracle at:

ORACLE
PC POWERPLAY
78 RENWICK ST.
REDFERN
NSW 2016
ORACLE@PCPOWERPLAY.NEXT.COM.AU

AGE OF EMPIRES



I need your help man! I've been living in a cave in lower Bolovia since Age Of Empires came out trying to finish it. I divorced the wife and sold the kids to Gypsies in the vain hope that I could finish this awesome game but I can't. Can you help me out please?

Grug, Second cave up Mt Bolivia.



Sure Grug, no problemo my man. These following codes should help you out for now. Just type these in the chat box. Oh yeah, your daughter says hi...

DIEDIEDIE: All other players die.

REVEAL MAP: Shows the entire map.

PEPPERONI PIZZA: Bonus 1000 food.

COINAGE: Bonus 1000 gold.

BETRAYAL AT KRONDOR



I know Betrayal At Krondor is an old game, but once a year I dust it off and try and get past the six Moredhel spellcasters on Level 5. Being a fresh year, I'm hoping you can lend me a helping hand.

Scott Davis
Adelaide SA



As you probably figured out already, this stage is an extremely difficult combat scenario and may take more than a few attempts before getting it right. Here are some tips: Use restoratives before the combat to boost your characters up to full health, and use them during combat if possible. Move your fighters into their ranks - they can't use their magic if you are standing right next to them. Also, make sure your armour and weapons are in peak condition, and if you have any potions or weapon or armour enhancers -



use them! If this doesn't work drop me another line next year for more details.

BROKEN SWORD



Please help, I have just arrived at Ireland and I'm having trouble trying to pass Billy the Goat. Each time I pass him he knocks me down. I've tried everything to pass him and it's getting very frustrating.

Kylie Beattie
Bacchus Marsh, VIC



Now if you had arrived in New Zealand you wouldn't be having this problem. Nevertheless, here's the answer. Approach the goat to the right of the trough (by left-clicking on the ladder). As soon as the goat knocks you over, click on the plowshare on the far left. When the goat is trapped, go to the ladder and enter the excavation.

COMMANDOS: BEHIND ENEMY LINES



Can you give me some advice on Commandos. I have reached mission eight and I have killed the gunner and all the guards around the ruins except the two near the top of the road without being noticed. It is seemingly impossible to kill one of these guys without someone seeing it. Any ideas on how to go further?

Andrew McCreddie
Kirribilli, NSW



This level is very difficult and may take a few attempts to get it right. The trick is to set up a chain reac-

tion with the barrels. Move the explosive barrels so that they link the two tanks with the water tank. Send the Green Beret to climb down the rockface and kill the soldier when he looks away, and shoot the guy in the machinegun nest. Lastly move the sniper along the road and get him to fire a shot at the barrel to begin the fireworks.

CROC



Please don't laugh at my request but it's for a bet with my little brother. We've had CROC now for a few months and I was telling the little snot that there were cheats available for it and he won't believe me. Please prove the ugly little smeg-head wrong by printing some.

Todd Durrant
Internet



Yeah Todd, tell your little bro that he doesn't know jack. Of course there's cheats for CROC but I don't know if the little squirt deserves them. Oh, okay then. Try these out...

ARGOLIFE: Unlimited lives
ARGOSKIP: Level select

CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND



I can't blow up the snow monkey on the rollercoaster in Curse Of Monkey Island. Please help me as I am 9

years old.
Zac Tazewell
Bungwahl, NSW

***** OK, here's what you do. Open your inventory, use the oil with the rope, and the oily rope with the keg of rum. Go up the screen with the giant snow monkey and put the keg of rum under the snow monkey's arm. Go down the screen and wait for LeChuck to come. When he's about to burn you, use the pepper on him and he'll sneeze fire right on the rope that happens to be connected to the rum keg. That means that it's gonna be one big blast, and the end of LeChuck and this great adventure.

NEED FOR SPEED 3

? Please help me Oracle! I've been addicted to the fantastic Need For Speed III since its release but can't open all the tracks or get all the cars. I might sound like a pathetic loser to you legends but I'm desperate for help.

GoGoMobile
Internet

***** Yeah, you certainly sound like a loser but don't despair, try these codes out. Maybe then we can get you onto the real tracks. Enter these codes as your username:

spoilt - Gives you the lot except for some of the secret tracks.

xcav8 - Opens the Caverns underground course.

gldfsh - Opens the Scorpio 7 underwater track.

NEVERHOOD

? I'm stuck. I just can't find my way to the next part of the game. I've fired the cannon and turned the bridge into stairs, turned on the radio but now I'm stuck. Can you please tell me what the radio does and what the symbols near the plant across the bridge do. I'm sick of being stuck... Help!

Joshua Smart
Tumut NSW

***** To make the radio work, return to the place where you woke up at the beginning of the game and pull the correct ring. The radio does more than play funny songs. If you set the radio to a certain song it will open the door to the lab.

The symbols are used to raise the cannon and move it over towards Robot Bill. One set of symbols can be found in the Hall of Records basement where you pressed the blue button (make sure the lights are out to see them) The second set of symbols can be found inside the mushroom after



you fall down the hole. Enter the symbols and then click on the arrows that appear in the scope. The cannon will move up and to the right. Press the red button and watch what happens to Robot Bill.

RESIDENT EVIL

? Hi, I've been playing Resident Evil for about 4 weeks now and I am stuck and I mean stuck. I am in the labs in 1r and in the room with the computer and you are supposed to type in "john" as a login name and "ada" as a password but I don't know how to type them in or anything. If you do help I will give you one of those doughnuts with the sprinkly stuff on top.

Jamie Grenenger
internet

***** There's a room you passed containing clues on how to decode the password (which by the way is MOLE). Use the 2 lights to solve the puzzle (one of the lights is hidden behind the bookcase). Return to the Computer Room and login as JOHN, and password ADA. You will now be given the option to unlock some doors, by using the password found in the previous room. Oh yeah, and watch out for the Zombies 'cause they like brains, particularly ones with sprinkly stuff on top.

WARCRAFT 2

? I need help with Warcraft 2. Level six is killing me! I am starting to think it is impossible to lead the Ogre through the enemy base. Please Oracle can you help me?

Asher Pratt
Marwillumbah, NSW

***** I deal with Ogres all the time so it shouldn't be hard to offer you some advice. First of all, there are at least 2 Orc catapults sitting on the island



where you start, south of the starting position. These are not enemy units; rather, you can "capture" them by moving one of your units next to them and then you can use them. Then, you want to spend the rest of the mission sniping at the enemy with your catapults. Advance your troops very slowly so only 1 or 2 Orcs come after you at a time. Save your game frequently; if you get rushed by a bunch of Orcs, load it back. The way to get only a couple of Orcs to come after you is to shoot at one with your catapult, then immediately withdraw the 'pault and wait for the Orcs with your regular troops. Hope this helps.

ZORK: GRAND INQUISITOR

We need help God Dammit!!! We are in the Monastery Subway station and we can't get up through the hatch. We've read the walkthrough from the gameguide and it tells us to find a rope at the GUE Tech entrance and use the "untie knots" spell on it. We have the spell, but we can't find the rope anywhere.

Richard and Becki
Stanmore, NSW

***** Yeah, yeah it's always easy to blame the walkthrough. Go back to the crossroads and take the dragon stairs back up to the well. Look up and you will see a rope. Don't climb up the rope, but instead cast Glorf on it and you'll get the rope. This will allow you access to the Monastery.

CODE

Just don't let anyone catch you using them

F-16 MULTIROLE FIGHTER

Note: These cheats also work in Mig-29 Fulcrum.

Press **T** for the message prompt and type:
you got what i need - Unlimited ammo
food goes here - Reload plane
big gulp - Refuel plane
you're here forever - Invincible
damn that corner - Can't crash
chiliburger - Repair plane
spindive - Can't be hit
upside down - Auto level fly upside down
paperairplane - Paper airplane

GRAND THEFT AUTO

Enter these codes at the character select screen, press "DEL" and enter the name.

itsgallus: All Levels All Cities
nineinarow: All Levels All Cities
super well: All Levels All Cities
iamthelaw: No Police
stevesmates: No Police
itcouldbeyou: Gives You 999999999 Points
suckmyrocket: All Weapons, Armour, & A Get Out Of Jail Free Card
istantrum: Unlimited Lives
6031769: Unlimited Lives
hate machine: Raises Point Values
buckfast: Press the * on the NUMPAD and get all the weapons
porkcharsui: Diagnostic Mode
callmenigel: Press * for all weapons
iamgarypenn: Extra offensive language mode
iamnotgarypenn: Disable extra offensive language mode

RETURN FIRE 2

Map select

Display the map selection screen. Then click on the following four bolts (in order) on the box in the top right that displays your name: top-left, top-right, bottom-left, bottom-right. Now press the cursor keys to select a new map.

Easter egg shrapnel

While playing a game, press ~ to display the command line and type "**easter!**". Then, all destroyed objects will create Easter eggs instead of shrapnel.

Suicide jeep

While in the command bunker, press ~ to display the command line and type "**fubar!**". Then, a jeep armed with a 1000 pound bomb will be created. A single hit on this vehicle will cause it to explode. Note: points, ranks and medals are disabled while this code is in effect.

BLOOD 2 (DEMO)

Press **T** to Talk, then type:

MPGOD - Godmode
MPKFA - Full Ammo, Armor, and Health
MPHEALTH - Full Health



MPAMMO - Full Ammo
MPARMOR - Full Armor
MPCLIP - Clipping
MPP05 - Show Position on/off
MPCAMERA - Adjust camera angle
MPLIGHTSCAPE - Adjust Light Scape on/off

COLIN MCRAE RALLY

DARKSIDE - drive all stages at night
BACKAGAIN - drive all the tracks backwards (Finish to Start)
FREEWAY - unlock all stages
PASSEDOUT - give Nicky control
WHITEOUT - race all tracks in fog
PRESSFAST - pedal power
CHOIRBOY - give Nicky a squeaky voice
SPECIAL - replay transition mode
ROCKETMAN - turbo boost
BIGGUNS - double power
TURNBACK - forklift steer
ALIENG00 - jelly car

LODE RUNNER 2

Press **[Esc]** during game play to display the options menu, then type **glazed donut** to enable cheat mode. Then, enter one of the following codes to activate the corresponding cheat function. A sound will confirm correct code entry.

F3 - Go back one level
F4 - Advance one level
Alt F12 - Gain five lives
Alt 8 - Ten bombs of each type
Alt K - "Beach Ball" power up
Alt I - "Inviso" power up
Alt T - "Morph" power up
Alt B - "Cloak" power up

KLINGON HONOR GUARD

PRESS **TAB** once, then type in one of the following codes:

allammo: All ammunition
behindview 1: External view
behindview 0: Normal view
flush: Reset bad textures on walls or creatures
fly: Fly mode
ghost: No clipping mode
god: God mode
hideactors: Hide all monsters, weapons, and items
showactors: Show all monsters, weapons, and items
invisible0: Disable invisibility
invisible1: Invisibility
killall <monster name>: Kill selected monsters
killpawns: Kill all monsters
open <map name>: Level select
playersonly: Disable timer
slomo <number>: Set game speed (1 is normal)
summon <item>: Summon weapon, item, or monster
suicide: Suicide
walk: Walk mode; resets no clipping and flight modes

*Platinum Series*

From
ridiculously
accurate
to just plain
brilliant.

*Gold Series**Elite Series*

You may not require the absolute accuracy of Sony's Platinum Series monitors, but now you can enjoy the brilliance of Trinitron technology at every level. Both Sony Gold and Elite Series displays benefit from state of the art Platinum design, to give you the best combination of performance and price in their class. So even if you don't need the ultimate, you can still have the best. Call 1 800 226 429 or visit www.sony.com.au for more information. **It's a Sony.**

SONY.

The ins and outs of the inside bits

When you write, remember to include as much pertinent information as possible. Send your CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT and any associated *.INI files for Windows that might tell me more about your problem. Give me as detailed an explanation as you can and be sure to include as much detail as possible about your PC. Feel free to email your questions or, if you want to snail mail, please remember to write clearly or better still, print your letters. Please note that due to the volume of messages we receive, we cannot guarantee a response to your queries.

Setup
PC PowerPlay
78 Renwick St.
Redfern
NSW 2016
setup@pcpowerplay.next.com.au

THE BETTER BUS

Q I read with interest the articles in November's issue about the latest cards 2D/3D, but am still confused.

The Banshee is PCI, correct, while the others are AGP? Am I going backwards if I invest in the old PCI instead of the new AGP technology?

How much slower is the Banshee in the important games (Quake2, Unreal etc) compared to the Voodoo2? In the Powerbench results, the Banshee is faster than the Voodoo2, but is this only the 3D results, or 2D/3D Powerbench of the Banshee and others compared to the 3D-only Powerbench of the Voodoo2?

Finally, is it better to get a good, but cheap 2D card and a Voodoo2, which is more expensive, or just a Banshee? Which is a better deal for the performance compared with price? Your help would be greatly appreciated.

Nathan
Internet

A That's an interesting question. While AGP is certainly a newer and more capable BUS standard, it hasn't made that big an impact for a number of reasons. Firstly, AGP was designed to give video cards fast access to main memory - this would allow video cards to use as much memory as you have installed in your PC, and also reduces the cost of the card since no memory chips need to be included. However, in practice, AGP just can't provide the speed required to do this efficiently, and unless video card manufacturers want to suffer slow performance, they'll throw memory on the card. This automatically removes the primary reason for using AGP. So why can't it pro-

vide the performance needed? Well, AGP has four bandwidth levels, 1x through to 4x. Today, no cards use anything more than 2x which can transfer around half a gig per second. To use higher modes, system BUS speeds in excess of 100MHz are required, since AGP shares the memory BUS with the CPU. Ultimately, you're not going to see 3x or 4x for a while yet, because today's RAM can't handle more than 133MHz in a stable fashion. In other words, while the AGP specification is a good idea, it's simply not practical with today's technology. In a way, AGP is just a fix for PCI. The PCI specification defines 66MHz operation, but today PCI BUSes only run at 33MHz. AGP runs at 66MHz and it's this increase in BUS speed that often shows up in performance benchmarks when comparing AGP cards versus PCI cards.

So, back to your question, are you investing in the old? No, you're investing in the present. PCI will be around for a long time, and it even has advantages AGP doesn't. For example, you'll need PCI cards if you want to SLI two Voodoo2's, and Win98's multi-monitor support can only work with PCI cards.

As for performance and which card to buy, it comes down to cost. 2D/3D chipset based cards such as the Banshee and Riva TNT are very price competitive, offering 2D and 3D support for less than the cost of a Voodoo2. Also, 2D/3D combinations are the

Am I going backwards if I invest in the old PCI instead of the new AGP technology?

way of the future - 3DFX's single card 3D solution was an excellent way to get the market going by allowing people to just add to their video subsystem, but it's impractical to buy two cards in future PC purchases.

So yes, it's better to get a 2D/3D combo now, but remember that the Banshee isn't the only one. Look around and find one that offers good performance for its price.

REAR-ENDED

Q I need help. I was on the Internet the other day and my virus scanner "command antivirus 95" gave me this message "c:\windows\system infection: win32/back_orifice.124928.trojan unable to remove virus", so i ran the antivirus program and it said the file was .exe in the windows\system directory, I tried to delete the file but it gave me an access violation, so I removed its properties and tried to delete it again. It still did not work. Could you please tell me how to delete it?

Richard
Internet

A This is bad, very bad. This sounds like Back Orifice, and it isn't a virus, it's a remote control client used to sabotage machines. Back Orifice is freely available on the Web and allows you to completely control someone else's PC - delete files, copy stuff, read documents, reboot their machine, whatever you want to do. The only requirement is that you get the target machine running the Back Orifice client program - easy to do for people who aren't that technically competent, such as sending someone an email with a program to run - you don't even know the client has been installed and is running (it won't show up in a process list), until things start to go wrong. Moreover, Back Orifice can probe the Internet for victims that have the client installed, so you don't have to be a target from anyone specific - files just go around the Web as they do, with Back Orifice attached, and pretty soon you've got thousands of machines which can be easily infiltrated (no thanks to Microsoft's flawed security - when are they going to write a real operating system?) Anyway, removing it might be harder than you realise. There's only one way to be sure, and that's a complete system reinstall and make sure you format the drive first. Check out the following link for more information about removing Back Orifice <http://www.ozemail.com.au/~dwarren/backorifice/index.html>

FILE TYPES EXPLAINED

Q Could you explain how that whole 'File Type' section works (What is DDE, what's the MIME option for, what kind of commands can you attach to file types? etc.)

David Russel
Internet

A File Types lets you assign programs to types of files - such as a DOC file to Word (that much I'm sure you knew). MIME stands for Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions and it defines what programs should be used to handle different file types sent over the Web. That's how Netscape knows to show a JPG when you click on it but automatically download when you click on a ZIP file. DDE (Dynamic Data Exchange) is something different - it's a communication protocol used by programs to interact with each other, such as sending data from one program to another. Windows uses DDE to help send information to a program when you click on its file type.

What type of commands can you attach to file types? Anything you want! Just remember that you need to pass values to programs and these are represented by variables. For example, the first variable Netscape accepts is the page to open. In terms of COMMAND.COM, the first passed variable to a program is represented by %1. If you look at the URL definitions for your file types and Netscape is your registered browser, you'll see something like 'NETSCAPE.EXE -h %1' as the command for opening the file.

THE ELUSIVE QUANTUMS

Q Hullo, I was just wondering what the difference was between the Obsidian2 X-24 and the Obsidian2 X-16? I know that one has 16MB and the other has 24MB but capability wise how is the X-16 crippled compared to the X-24?

Also could you tell me if I could get either of these cards in Australia or would it be cheaper and easier to order from an online store?

Paul
Internet

A The X-16 is identical to the X-24 except in terms of its onboard RAM. Imagine the X-16 as two 8M Voodoo2 cards and the X-24 as two 12M Voodoo2 cards. That's it. If you think using 12M cards is a performance benefit over 8M cards, go for the X-24. However, this decision might be moot - you can't currently buy Quantum cards in Australia. I was awaiting delivery of one myself when I discovered that the only Australian distributor pulled out from dealing with Quantum in the US, apparently because Quantum was having a hard time just meeting US demand. As a result, I went and bought the next best (actually, much better) thing - I bought a Riva TNT based card. I'm sorry V2 owners (and I had one myself for a while) but 3Dfx's reign is over, the TNT rocks both in image quality and speed (now I bet this is going to generate some toasty replies).

So, Paul, I'd recommend buying a newer chipset technology based

I already have Wing5 on my computer, so to do a clean install, what actually is required?

card. Besides, if you add up the cost of a Quantum board you'll find it's more expensive than two Voodoo2s. Still, SLI is the fastest 3D available so if you're keen to give your games SLI glory, just fork out for two Voodoo2 boards.

CLEAN WHAT?

Q In issue 30, in reply to "To upgrade or not" you mentioned using a clean install for Windows 98. I already have Wing5 on my computer, so to do a clean install, what actually is required? Should I just boot into DOS and then delete my Windows directory and remove all reference to Windows from my Autoexec.bat and Config.sys files? What other files should I edit, remove, or keep?

Aaron Birch
Internet

A Actually, by clean install, I refer to formatting the drive and re-installing Windows and all your applications. However, what you've described is the next best thing if you really don't want to go through formatting and re-installing everything. Just removing the WINDOWS directory and cleaning up your AUTOEXEC.BAT and CONFIG.SYS (if required) will do nicely. Just make sure that you can see your CD-ROM in DOS so you can reinstall Windows, although if you have the space it's much easier to copy the Windows 98 CD to your drive first and install from there.

Tech Tips

Make life just that little bit easier.

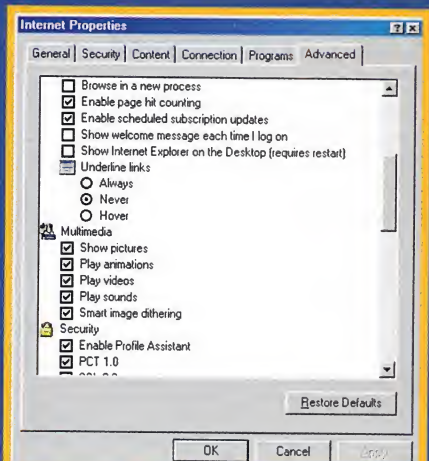
ONE CLICK WONDER

If you're using Windows 98 you might notice that one-click launching is damn handy, and also damn ugly due to those stupid underlines. Well, the good news is that you can get rid of them thusly;

- * Open up My Computer and then View -> Folder Options
- * Choose 'Custom...' and then click Settings

- * Under 'Click items...' select Single Click
- * Make sure 'Underline icon titles consistent with my browser' is selected
- * Say OK and then open Control Panel
- * Select Internet and then Advanced
- * Scroll down to 'Underline links' and select Never

All done! Now you can use the new one-click interface and you won't see underlines, even when you point at an icon. Nice huh?

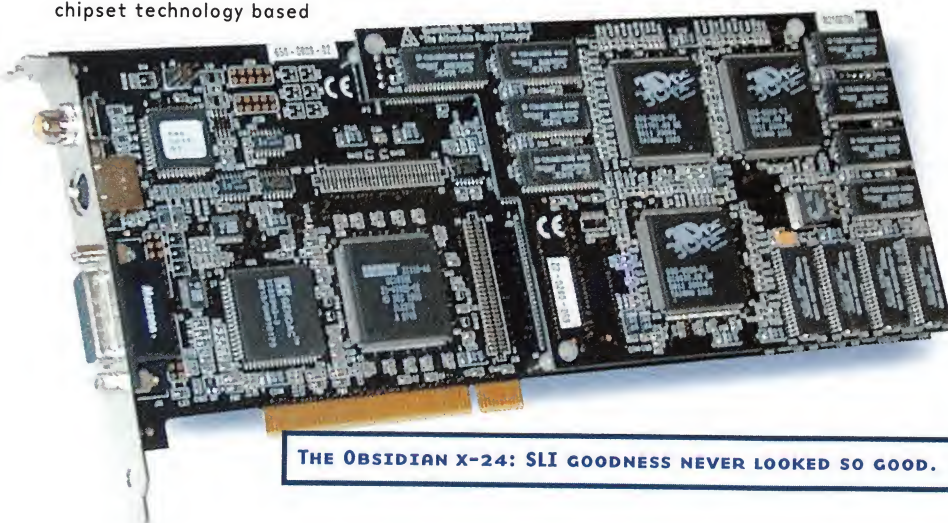


MAKING SURE THOSE DARN UNDERLINES DON'T SHOW UP.

AND NOW A JUST FINE 'N' DANDY TIP FROM DAVID RUSSELL:

Hey there doc, to follow up 'One Awesome Tip' here's another suggestion: Create a shortcut to notepad.exe, then move the shortcut into the directory C:\Windows\SendTo. Now when you right click on a file move the mouse over the "Send To >" option and you can send the file to notepad. You can do this with almost every program shortcut, directory shortcut, or even special shortcuts like an email address.

That's an excellent tip Dave, thanks!



THE OBSIDIAN X-24: SLI GOODNESS NEVER LOOKED SO GOOD.

XITEL STORM PLATINUM & HERCULES TERMINATOR BEAST

The race for the best technology in 3D video cards continues apace, but this month we take an in-depth look at 3D sound cards as well

Xitel Storm Platinum

Polyphony: 320 instruments or simultaneous notes

Effects: Too numerous to list - Full A3D 2.0 + EAX support.

Full Duplex: Yes

Sample Rate: 5Hz - 48KHz

Front and Rear speaker support: Yes

MIDI Wavetable Memory Size: 0 Mb - uses DLS (like AGP but for MIDI)

S/PDIF support: Yes

DMA Output channels: 96

DirectSound channels: 92

DirectSound 3D channels: 72

A3D 2.0 Channel: 16

Wavetable voices : 320

Downloadable instruments: Yes

Graphic equalizer: 10 band

3D Audio positioning: Yes

Geometry based acoustics: Yes

RRP: \$249

It's always pleasing to see an Australian company do well, and Xitel are putting out the kind of product that's going to make the big boys sit up and take notice. The small, Canberra based company is headed up and staffed by a group of hardcore gamers, and they're deliberately making cards aimed at other people like them, which is why they're using Aureal's Vortex 2 chip.

The latest in technology wars has flared up in the sound card industry with plenty of controversy and litigation surrounding the SB Live vs Aureal Vortex2 situation. Most of it is to do with comparative data (which I've managed to avoid, for now) about which the 2 companies are in constant dispute.

Creative has already responded to the Aureal threat by utilis-

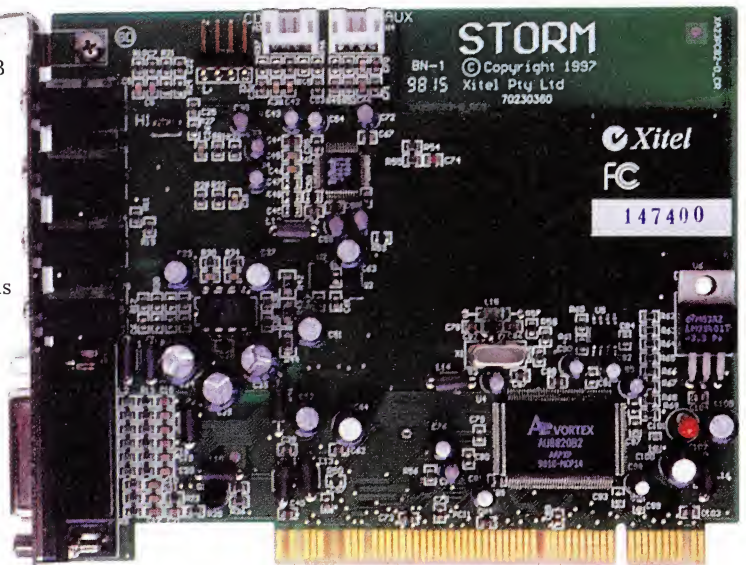
ing the powerful and reprogrammable EMU10K1 on the SB Live and issuing patches to improve the SB Live's performance capabilities.

Here at Powerplay it's our first taste of Aureal's Vortex2 and A3D 2.0 technology, which has been really quite aurally palatable. The first thing that has to be considered regarding this sound card is its price. At AUD\$249 it's definitely the cheapest fully 3D solution available. An absolute bargain, really, as this is a very high quality card.

Sonically the Storm Platinum is a premium card with only one niggle. Something I was surprised to see carried over from the Vortex 1 chips was the relatively 'treble' sound of the signal processor. I'm a serious audiophile so it made a difference to me, but for anyone else, really, it's not too concerning. The 10 band graphic equalizer went a long way to cure this, however where the bass would increase, the depth of the sound didn't.

This isn't meant to say that the sound from the Vortex2 is bad, only that it inherited some traits from its predecessor - sound-wise it is pristine. The difference between 128 and 192 kilobit audio is exceptionally discernible. 4 speaker support in the Vortex 2 is now an excellent inclusion that is handled properly. Diamond's original Monster Sound included 4 speaker support, but this was a proprietary solution from Diamond, and in my opinion it wasn't quite up to scratch. The Vortex2, however, treats sound sources properly and utilises all 4 speakers complete with surround and EAX effects.

The card we received was only a beta, and EAX support is



not yet complete. We are assured however that EAX is an open standard, and Aureal have already verified that the Vortex2 can handle it. This means that once ready, all the nifty preset game effects for the SB Live will be accessible to the Vortex2.

Hardware acceleration for the Storm Platinum is also exceptional. 72 Direct Sound 3D channels (along with 16 A3D 2.0 channels) is plenty and games such as Unreal, Shogo MAD, Wipeout 2097 and Quake 2 all performed admirably with no skipping or pauses from playing sound. And once you do hear a game with a decent speaker setup and A3D support, you'll quickly come to realise just what you had been missing out on. Unreal, Half-Life, Sin, Myth2, Descent Freespace, and a host of other games are immeasurably enhanced when you're using an A3D card.

MIDI on the Storm Platinum is fine for games and CD quality (the sample set is actually 48KHz - DAT quality, not 44.1KHz CD quality), however MIDI enthusiasts might be left a

little unsatisfied. There is, though, the option to add a daughtercard to expand the hardware sample set, which should go a long way toward resolving this. The Storm Platinum uses DLS, which is a standard from the MIDI Manufacturer's Association for a portable sample set format. Its articulation is nowhere near the level of the SoundFont format used by EMU Synths and Creative Sound cards, unfortunately.

The biggest problems with DLS is that it only supports limited effects on instruments. Each instrument only has a maximum of 16 regions with each region being made up of one sample, though keyboards have 128 regions. DLS also doesn't include support for many MIDI functions including multi velocity (which means a different sound is played based on how hard the key is struck). This might seem trivial but is a much used function by musicians and their subsequent MIDI files. In fairness, the Xitel card is not really aimed at composers and musicians though - it's aimed at

SPECULAR SPOTLIGHT

King's Quest 8

This month in the spotlight we're looking at a game that continues the PC gaming tradition. Kings Quest 8 is the first of the Quest series to be fully 3D. Don't doubt it for a second, 3D is going to become the totally natural choice for more games, including adventures and looking at these screenshots will explain why.

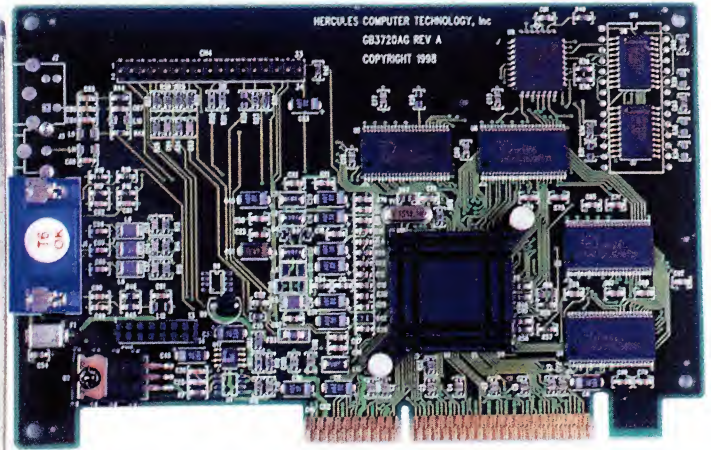


gamers, so this is not a major consideration at all for most of us. Also, DLS 2 is on its way and will address many of the shortcomings of DLS, with full support for Microsoft's DirectMusic standard.

Overall the Vortex2 is an excellent sound processor and the Storm Platinum incorporates it well. Games perform exceptionally through the card and its 4 speaker support is the best for any A3D compatible card. Compared to the SB Live it's worthy competition, and much cheaper too. There are

now around 30 games that support A3D, including high profile titles such as Half-Life, Sin, Unreal (and all Unreal-engine games), Jedi Knight, Tomb Raider 3, Myth2, and plenty more to boot.

The Storm Platinum is priced very attractively, it is designed for gamers (which is what we are, after all), and should provide serious competition for Creative's SB Live. Once we get our hands upon a final version of the card we'll take a closer comparative look at Vortex 2 and Creative's sound technologies.



Hercules Terminator Beast

Chipset: Savage S3 featuring;

Single cycle trilinear filtering, DirectX texture compression, True colour rendering, True colour dithering for 16-bit modes, Specular lighting and diffuse shading, Alpha blending modes, Multiple textures, Full scene anti-aliasing, Vertex and table fog, 16 and 24-bit Z-buffering, MPEG-2 video textures, Hardware-assisted bump mapping and anisotropic filtering, Sprite anti-aliasing, reflection and environment mapping, texture morphing, shadows, procedural textures, and atmospheric effects.

Congratulations are in order to S3 who, with the release of the Savage S3 chipset, have affirmed for themselves a place back in 3D contention. We've already talked a lot about the Savage S3 in terms of feature set in previous tech news articles and the current Hot Hardware Guide, so this commentary is geared towards how the Savage fared overall.

The first thing that has to be put to rest regarding the Savage is whether its faster than the Voodoo 2. The answer is no - it's pretty much the same speed. In numerous DirectX tests the Voodoo 2 and the Savage S3 would mark very closely. Generally speaking, the Voodoo 2 was always a little faster, but we're talking about very small difference.

Image quality for the Savage S3 is very crisp and clear. It's definitely not better than the Voodoo 2, as with the Riva TNT and the Matrox G200, instead image quality is very much on par. In games such as Shogo MAD,

Quake II (OpenGL is fully supported and very crisp and clear) and Heretic II it was virtually impossible to tell the difference between the Voodoo 2 and the Savage S3. Taking this into account when compared to the abysmal image quality of S3's previous products it's obvious they've really cleaned up their act.

The next of the "controversial" issues to be put to rest is that of texture compression. I've read so much about this particular function, particularly since it has a growing number of allies and enemies that I went to lengths to verify image quality. Using a function of the Hercules utilities I checked a box that forced texture compression on all DirectX activities and tried Shogo MAD, Wipeout 2097 and Forsaken.

The textures remained crisp and clear, and games such as Wipeout 2097 were even clearer than on other cards. Signs with text on them showed no compression scarring and the integrity of all the games tested remained in tact. Texture compression, if to be based solely on the Savage S3, looks to be quite a viable addition to the feature sets of 3D accelerators.

Although the Savage S3 can res up to 1280 x 1024, on a P2 350 it wasn't really feasible (too much slow down). All games including Quake 2 did, however, run at 1024 x 768, and looked great and played well.

There were a couple of problems with the Savage though. In Forsaken the crosshairs weren't correctly transparent, instead a purple box drew around them for some reason. The other problem was that the S3 was rather prone to crashing. Numerous times the entire machine would lock up, and this was in both DirectX and OpenGL games.

Overall the Savage is due to be a success. It offers exceptional 2D/3D performance and with the

way that S3 chipsets are incorporated onto Asian clone video products there are bound to be a lot of Savages out there soon.

3D Tech News

Just like with 3D accelerators the war for dominance of 3D sound is heating up. QSound are about to enter the Aureal/Creative fight with their own new 3D sound card.

QSound labs will be introducing three 3D audio technologies shortly. They're offering the QSound Multi-Speaker System (QMSS), QSurround for headphones and Q3D 2.0. Q3D 2.0 will bring to 3D audio QSound Environmental Modelling and multi-speaker playback. QEM is a reverberation engine that's compatible with Environmental Audio Extensions (I wonder if Creative is sorry for making that an open standard) and new functions that consider how sound interacts with environmental elements such as room acoustics, the position of players and the sound source.

The QSound Multi-Speaker System is a stereo-to-surround algorithm designed to create stunning surround-sound from ordinary stereo content such as CDs and stereo input. Sounding remarkably similar to Creative's CMSS, the QMSS algorithm steers acoustic images to all 4 speakers. The most interesting of the new QSound technologies is QSurround for Headphones. It works by processing all the digital surround information and then creating "virtual speakers" within a "virtual room" and then sends the information to the headphones. QSound are well respected in the audio industry with bands often recording their CDs in QSound (The Presidents Of The USA, for example). Definitely worth looking out for.

Blade 3D

Trident are giving 3D another go and are nearing completion on their upcoming media accelerator the Blade 3D. The Blade 3D chip purportedly has a polygon peak rate of 2.5 million triangles per second (with back face culling) with a maximum fill rate of 110 Million pixels per second.

The Blade 3D also offers Anisotropic plus Trilinear texture filtering as well as compressed texture formats DXT1 and

DXT2. Mip Mapping is to 11 levels of detail with perspective correction, colour keying for translucency and full DVD support at 30 fps and only utilising 50 CPU. Also featured is true colour 32-bit rendering with per pixel complexity and 1/16th sub-pixel precision. The Blade is also a fully OpenGL compliant device with blending for fog and depth queuing.

Rage software, the people behind the very pretty but rather dull Incoming are extremely interested in the Blade 3D and claim that realistic motion rendering should be possible on a P2/Blade 3D equipped system. This could be big.

Quick Bytes

Lander

Well someone had to finally take the initiative and it looks like Psygnosis have. Lander is their first DVD game, and delivers MPEG 2 full-motion video sequences with Dolby(R) Digital 5.1 channel music as well as in-game audio and interleaving sound effects. This is a good thing, it would be a big shame for DVD to die out, even if the game itself seems rather...average so far.

Unreal patch 220

Tim Sweeney of Unreal fame has been working hard to address a series of bugs with Unreal and is finally claiming success. The biggest drawback of Unreal was its absolute unplayability over the Net - which is now apparently resolved. The patch is being finalised now and will also include many enhancements and improvements that were originally slated to be included in next year's Unreal Tournament Product.

The team however felt that portions of this content should be released along with as a reward for gamers who have been patiently awaiting numerous fixes. As for Unreal Tournament, it's going to be a completely different product that uses hardly any existing content whatsoever.

NT the fastest?

A Compaq system has broken a record for the fastest computer. By tying together 72 Proliant servers running Windows NT into a machine called the "Kudzu Cluster," Compaq broke the record for the time it takes to

sort a terabyte, or a trillion bytes of data. The data was sorted in 50 minutes, three times faster than the previous 150-minute record. IBM and Silicon Graphics are already preparing to dethrone Compaq. Forget the Olympics, the new wave of "time trial" sport is in computer power.

Permedia 3 to accelerate Voxels

Voxels are the 3D process that made Comanche so graphically amazing many moons ago, though the limitations of Voxel technology have become very

apparent over time. Permedia 3, obviously looking to get an edge over other accelerators has offered acceleration that uses voxels in conjunction with polygons, and the results could be very interesting.

(top) Unreal
(below) Shogo MAD



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Net Game News

Cyberhappening things

Starcraft: There's more!

You honestly didn't expect to see the last of Kerrigan now, did you? The Zerg Queen of Blades (formerly known as) is back and her hunger for domination is greater than ever. Yup, it's time to get excited - Brood War, the first official StarCraft expansion pack, is on its way! And it's looking to be the must have title for any RTS fan, let alone the rabid StarCraft freak. Of course, you'll need a copy of StarCraft to be able to run the expansion pack, so being the fan will definitely be an advantage. While some players still argue about StarCraft's single player offering, multiplayer is being thrashed in a major way. It just goes to show how much a detailed and free multiplayer support structure can ensure a game's longevity. In StarCraft's case, it's Battlenet (<http://www.battle.net/>). Diablo - which also uses Battlenet - is still being played (and purchased) frequently, almost 2 years after its release date, all thanks to this online gaming gem. For those dubious about picking up StarCraft even sans mission pack, know that you're at least guaranteed a multiplayer game ANY time you log on - and it's fun too (as well as PCPP reader's Game of the Year).

Back to Brood War. Currently in beta testing, we were lucky enough to get a hold of



Starcraft: The game that just keeps giving

the CD and spent countless hours putting it through its paces. Unfortunately, there's not that much to be said at this stage. The Brood War beta test CD had only the multiplayer function (and bnet-compatible only to boot) enabled, so we didn't get a chance to try out any of the single player mis-



TOP MULTIPLAYER GAMES THIS MONTH:

1. Starcraft
2. Ultima Online
3. Quake II
4. Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II
5. Motocross Madness

And we thought no one played Dark Forces III! As much as there's nothing like happily gibbing away at other players, there's no other game out there that lets you brandish a light sabre and go in for a Vader v Skywalker style duel. Star Wars fever, and in particular Prequel fever (www.starwars.com), is at it again.

To nominate your favourite (and preferably most played) multiplayer game, simply email NGN at ngn@pcpowerplay.next.com.au, with the subject line "Favourite multiplayer game nomination".

HOTTEST TC/MOD OF THE MONTH

This month, we're featuring a utility rather than a game. Yep, the online gamer's best friend - ICQ - has had a facelift.

ICQ '99

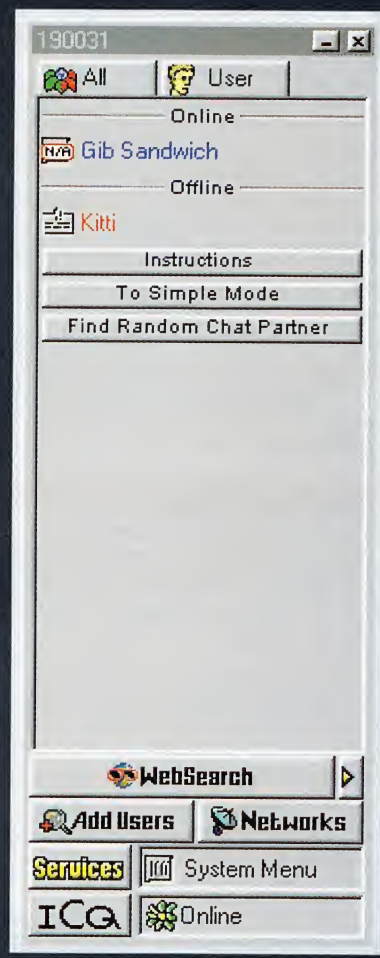
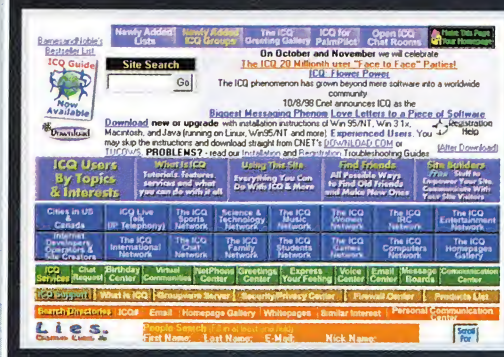
Developer/s: Mirabilis

Game engine: NA

Available: Early '99

WWW: <http://www.mirabilis.com>

The ICQ phenomenon keeps expanding. While ICQ has never actually been fully released, new versions of the software have been popping up regularly. We were lucky enough to get our hands on an alpha version of ICQ '99. New to this version are stacks of little features, which are making ICQ a much more communal net utility than ever before. ICQ '99 has been further integrated with the WWW (and in particular Mirabilis' site) - as well as with other online communication tools, to make it a central online utility. The personal information section has been expanded, allowing people to put much more personal information than before - including image files. Your ICQ list can now be categorised too - into General, Friends, Family and Co-Workers - which is a very useful and welcome little feature. You can also leave voice mail messages now (we wonder how many online gaming groups are going to suffer because of this).



sions and level editing. Blizzard have stated however, that the single player missions planned for Brood War are going to be of the "oh crap. Oh CRAP.. OH CRAP!" variety. Nope, they won't be crap levels, just extremely challenging. Does anyone remember Beyond the Dark Portal expansion for Warcraft?

New units announced are the Medic and Valkyrie for the Terrans; the Corsair, Dark Templar (finally!) and Dark Archon for the Protoss; and the Devourer and the Lurker for the Zerg. For a detailed list of what these units are all about go to <http://www.blizzard.com/broodwar/>.

As far as new unit effectiveness in multi-player - again, it's too early to make any big call. The whole nature of the beta test is to find a balance between all the units, so they ALL undergo constant tweaking. Even the older units' values have been changed, to accommodate the new ones. Expect a slightly different challenge with existing units when you log on and multiplayer Brood War. Some of the new units are useful - in particular the Terran Medic (which allows you to heal troops on the battlefield), while others are just plain fun (imagine storming a base with a couple of Dark Templars and Dark Archons!). Their effectiveness is still being determined, though. In one version of the beta, the Valkyrie could do a huge number of hit points of damage, whereas in a later version (after being patched), its damage was halved.

UO: T2A

Just a few days before deadline NGN managed to get its hands on a copy of Ultima Online - The Second Age (<http://www.owo.com>). The new options are all welcome, but how about the new land and monsters? Two words. Damn hard. You'll spend much more time running away from monsters than anything else, at

least at the early stages of your character's development. Also, with the new lands, getting around is much more of an adventure. The standard UO map has been seen (though not in exact form), for over fifteen years - so that when you logged on, you never really felt at all lost except if you were

a new comer to the game. With the Second Age, which uses a completely fresh land-mass, it is extremely easy to get lost. And the lack of houses in the wilderness is also a welcome change.

It's good to know though, that you don't have to purchase an expansion pack to get a fresh experience from an existing game. Origin, for Halloween only, surprised UO players by offering a new shard to play on. Named The Abyss, the theme of this shard was all ghosts and goblins. Monster spawning sites were littered throughout the towns, and all manner of monsters only usually seen in the darkest dungeons and far away spawning points were seen walking through the streets of all the major cities throughout Britannia. Scattered throughout the place were portals, which once entered, changed your character into one of the many monsters that inhabit the game. It was blissfully, as expected, total chaos. Death was frequent and unavoidable. The lag too, was unavoidable, and also quite heavy - but damn did everyone have fun. Origin called it a success and have planned more special events like these for the near future.

Wednesday, 11 November 1998

COMMUNITY

PLAYGUIDE

SHOPPING

SUPPORT

HOME

What's New

Feature

Screen Shots

Requirements

Awards

Survey

E-MAIL US

WHAT'S NEW

We have added the five new shards to the guild reporting page. Impressively, there are already 362 guilds on Asuka!

[Full Story](#)

UPDATE CENTER

The UO Update Center is the nexus for information regarding Shard Issues, Game Updates, Common Issues, FYIs, or Comments from the Team. So if it's about UO and it's a hot topic, it probably starts here.

[Full Story](#)

SERVICE & PAYMENT INFO

TERMS & AGREEMENTS

SPECIAL PRICE FOR THE SECOND AGE

In celebration of the first anniversary of the ground breaking game Ultima Online, ORIGIN Systems announces that it will offer copies of Ultima Online: The Second Age to the more than 200,000 purchasers of the original version for a special price.

DOWNLOADS

Check here for the latest downloads of UO utilities and applications as well as movies and other downloadables.

SECOND AGE FAQ

WEBSTALK

Once again we've scoured the web for the finest, (and funniest) sites and thrown five on this page for your viewing pleasure.

WINDOWS 98 ANNOYANCES

<http://annoyances.org/wing98/>

There are very few sites on the web which are both useful and humorous. This is one of them. Don't be fooled by the name, this isn't a total slag off Windows site, although some of the stories and humour head down that path. The site's main purpose is to help people cope with (and adjust) all those little things in windows which they may not have known they could do. There are heaps of little tricks of the trade here, and the site is definitely worth a look. Somewhat let down by the somewhat frustration site design.

Content: ★★★★★

Site Design: ★★★

BABYLON PARK

<http://infinicorp.com/babylonpark/>

Well I guess it was inevitable that someone would think of combining Babylon Five and South Park. Well maybe it wasn't, but it has happened anyway. This is certifiably one of the funniest sites you will ever visit if you're into either series. If you're into both you'll be rolling around on the floor forever. Unlike most twisted idea sites this one has had a lot of love and care put into its development and it shows in the very slick presentation. Positively the funniest site I've seen in ages.

Content: ★★★★★

Site Design: ★★★★★

THE INTERNATIONAL LYRICS SERVER

<http://lyrics.ch/search.html>

Finding lyrics can be a bit tough if you don't know the exact places to go. This site solves that problem forever. Lyrics for just about every band you can think of, from Hardcore Metal to punk to Rod Stewart. All in the one place and all you have to do is type in the band, album and song you're after. What could be easier? From the few random searches I did too it seems that its pretty up to date with new albums, it would be a drawback if it wasn't. (Sent by Wayne Beecher)

Content: ★★★★★

Site Design: ★★★★★

DAVE'S VIDEO GAME CLASSICS

<http://www.davesclassics.com>

Ahhhhh, the good old days. If you're a hardened gamer who went through the C64/Amiga days this site will bring back so many memories of days gone by sitting in front of those keyboard playing 16 colour games and loving it. This site deals with all

that, and also contains a lot of information about emulators and such so you can live it all again. While this is a great site, and definitely worthy of space here, playing "The Last Ninja" of your ninja PC isn't as much fun as you might imagine. Scour the papers for that C64 for \$20 and wreak havoc!

Content: ★★★★★

Site Design: ★★★★★



SITE OF THE MONTH

LANPARTY.COM

<http://www.lanparty.com>

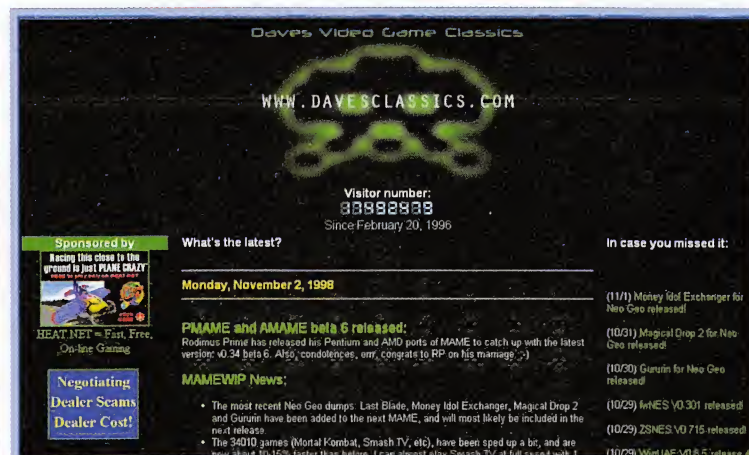
LAN (Local Area Network) parties are loads of fun, blowing up your mates is never better when you all have to sleep in the same room and eat microwaved pizza for breakfast! Getting one going though can be a bit of a hassle, and if you do host one and you happen to run into problems you'll have death-match starved gamers to contend with. Not a pretty thought. Fear not though, because Lanparty.com has all the answers. Detailed FAQs about how to get everything working properly as well as a LAN directory if you're looking for a party to go to. Easy site design to wander through as well. Very useful site for anyone who goes to or hosts LAN parties.

Content: ★★★★★

Site Design: ★★★★★



Rod "Spoonman" Campbell
Spoonman@hunterlink.net.au
<http://surf.to/spooney>





Back Issues

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#1 Online fighter combat, Duke 3D, Grand Prix 2, Warcraft 2 playguide.

#2 Kali net games, Earthsiege 2, Zork Nemesis, C&C playguide.

#3 3D graphic accelerators, Settlers 2, Cyberstorm, Zork Nemesis walkthrough.

#4 PC buyers guide, Australian Rugby League, Normality, Spycraft walkthrough.

#5 Net games, Time Commando, Close Combat, Civ 2 strategy guide.

#6 Best and worst games of all time, Quake, Pandora Directive, Flight sim roundup.

#7 Violence in games, Mechwarrior Mercenaries, Krush Kill 'n Destroy, MMX Pentiums

#8 Making of a Game, Video Card feature, C&C Red Alert, Privateer 2.

#9 Red Alert Feature, Alphaworld, Wavetable soundcards, Tomb Raider, Syndicate Wars.

#10 New Star Wars games, 3D accelerators compared, DIY Upgrade guide, Discworld 2

#11 Diablo, Interstate '76, MMX Pentiums examined, Build your own PC and network, Dark Reign.

#12 MDK, Quake Mission Packs, Huge Joystick guide, Internet Newsgroups, Ecstasia 2.

#13 Need for Speed II, X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter, Quake addons, PCs versus Consoles debate, Online game hackers.

#14 Dark Reign, Doom Clones, 16 Modems tested, Derek Smart, Comanche 3, Redneck Rampage.

#15 Carmageddon, E3 Report, Tomb Raider 2 preview, Blood & Sex

#16 Dungeon Keeper, RPG feature, Lands of Lore II preview, Virtual Reality, Last Express playguide

#17 Age of Empires, 500MHz Pentiums, Starfleet Academy, Beam Software, Software Piracy

#18 Jedi Knight, Total Annihilation, Hexen II, Quake addon megaguide

#19 Blade Runner, Tomb Raider 2, AFL '98, 3D CPUs, Quake 2 first look

#20 TOCA Touring Cars, Heavy Gear, FIFA '98, Next-Gen 3D cards, Dark Reign Playguide Pt.1

#21 Quake II, Intel's EPIC new CPU, I-War, Monkey Island 3, Multi vs Single player gaming debate, Dark Reign Playguide Pt.2

#22 Battlezone, 1GHz hot chips, Ultima Online Chronology & Tour guide, Starcraft Beta, Unreal, Quake 2 playguide

#23 Forsaken preview, Obsidian 3Dfx cards, i740 3D accelerators, Adventure, games, Red Baron II

#24 Tiberian Sun preview, Voodoo II cards benchtested, Blade Runner playguide, Rebellion, Incoming

#25 Starcraft, Forsaken, Motherboard Benchtest, Lifestyle of a True Gamer, Virtual Reality, Soccer Games

#26 Unreal, Modems benchtest, Starcraft strategy guide, PCI sound cards, DIY Web Page, Might & Magic VI, Player Killers

#27 X-Files, Mech Commander, E3 Report, Gameworthy PCs, Network Gaming, Forsaken Playguide, CPU overclocking

#28 Dune 2000, Win 98, 3Dfx Banshee, Flight Sim roundup, Powerslide, Commandos, Unreal playguide

#29 How real are Racing Sims?, Sin Preview, AMD k6-2, Future CPUs, Unreal playguide, Mech Commander playguide

#30 Motocross Madness, Tomb Raider III, Prey, Carmageddon 2, Online gaming, Video Card benchtest

#31 European Air War, Half-life, Ultima Online, Budget & Beast PCs, Rainbow 6 playguide

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Thanks for the games

One of the biggest issues at the moment is the lack of gameplay in games. And who can forget the good old days of gaming, where in an adventure game you would have to type in every known combination of words that is possible to drink a glass of water, before it would actually do what you wanted. And let's not forget great games like Pong, which truly challenged one's coordination and made the player actually feel fully immersed. Then we advanced; Space Invaders, Double Dragon, all of which pushed the technology of the time to the limit.

Now we must look at the recent past, first there was Wolfenstein 3D, Commander Keen, Duke Nukem 2, Doom. All of these we can look back on and remember how many months we played them for. After that there was a huge leap, to the likes of Duke Nukem 3D, Quake, Command and Conquer, Warcraft 2, again, we can look back and think of many fond hours playing. The big question is, what do we have now? We have what we always wanted of course! But it's human nature to want more, and how memories blur in time, like how boring it was in Duke Nukem always shooting the same sprite, and how in Quake Deathmatch the guy with the rocket could always kill everyone. Then there was the Grunt and Tank Rushes.

You cannot have a classic at the time of release, it takes time. A classic will only become a classic when it is looked back on and compared to the present offerings. Perhaps the reason for everyone being bored with games is not the game's fault, but the gamers. One surely gets bored repeating the same thing over and over, with just a few graphical and control improvements. So people complain, they sit back in front of their screens, but do they have any ideas for where games can go from now? No siree, but they can quite easily develop expectations that game developers can do something special.

I say a big pat on the back to game developers, and to the people that aren't happy with what's on

offer, either design your own or stop gaming, but don't just sit back on your ergonomic high horse and demand bigger and better things.

I have raved on enough so although I have other things to say, I will stop and hopefully spurn some angry replies.

Tim Wallis
Bentleigh, VIC

Playing the Game game

I'm sure in the past many people have asked what they can do if they have a great idea for a PC game and want to see it made. Of course the obvious thing to tell them was to take up a career path in computer programming or go learn C++ in their spare time. But, what if you don't intend to become a programmer and don't have time to learn C++? What if you just think you have a good idea and really want to send it to a company? Even if people have no experience in programming, it should not mean that they cannot contribute their ideas to the PC game world. This is because people play computer games for the content and concepts of the games, not just the technical programming.

So as a gamer with a mind full of ideas what can I do? Is there anywhere I can mail my ideas even just to suggest them to companies? If there is, what procedures should you take in doing so?

The most frustrating feeling is knowing you could have done something, but you never tried. It is also incredibly annoying telling people about your ideas and (while getting kudos from them) realising you will never be able to do anything about your idea. There is also nothing wrong with sending in your ideas to a company even if they think your ideas are poor or stupid. At least the writer's curiosity is fulfilled and many of the greatest innovations of our time were thought to be stupid when first conceived. So if you wanted to transmit your ideas to a company with the ambitious hope that they would actually consider using them, what should you do?

Mark Liu
Internet

Most game developers love receiving proposals for new games. There are just a couple of things that you need to keep in mind: Firstly, you should send your proposal to a game develop-



JOLT COLA LETTER OF THE MONTH

A CASE OF THE GOOD STUFF FOR THE LETTER THAT SAYS IT BEST

Lara's Butt

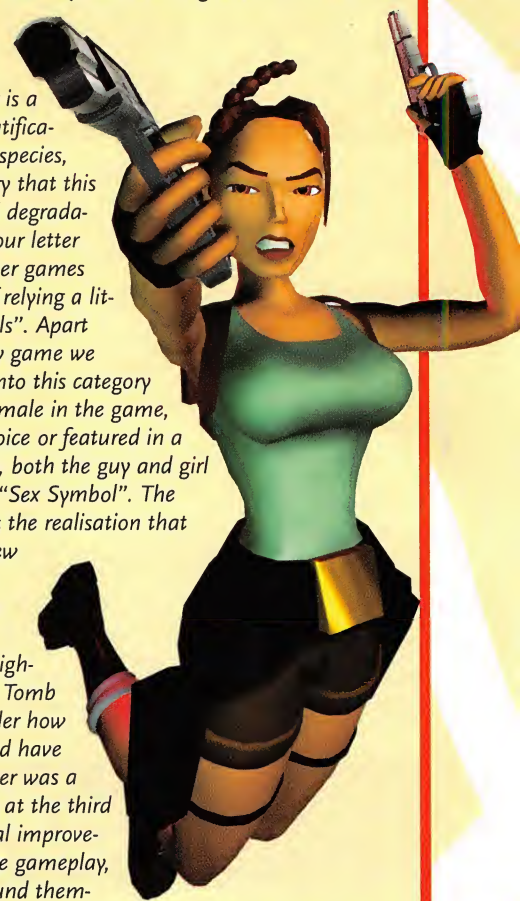
In this world there are two sexes, male and female. You probably already know this. However, I'm not sure that the other magazines and software producers do. Games like the Tomb Raider series are really a let down to girl PC players. We girls don't want to play a game that exposes us to a fake, 1/2 naked body that can wear shorts in the mountains. The whole idea of watching another girl's butt for a full game disgusts me and many other girl PC gamers. Girl gamers deserve more respect. Let's face it, computer games are basically being made to suit the male demand. Of course, it is the male populace that brings the steady flow of cash in for software producers, but that is only because there are more games for guys than girls. If more PC software producers and PC magazines encouraged girls to have a look at their products (not Lara Croft, as sexy as the guys may think she is) they would get more girls interested in buying their stuff and therefore get more money.

Hard-core girl PC gamers are hard to come across. As we are so few, we should be given more credit and not be thought of as weirdos just because we like Quake, Carmageddon, Unreal, etc.

Lara's Butt
Freedom Fighter
Dodges Ferry, TAS

Granted, Tomb Raider is a blatant bit of primal gratification for the male of the species, but it's too early to worry that this sort of game-style/social degradation is commonplace. Your letter got us talking about other games which could be guilty of relying a little too much on "sex sells". Apart from Tomb Raider, every game we could think of that fell into this category had both a female and male in the game, as either a character choice or featured in a leading role. In all cases, both the guy and girl could be described as a "Sex Symbol". The other surprise for us was the realisation that there are, in fact, very few games that go for this cheap and easy route to the gamer's wallet.

However, your letter highlights the issue with the Tomb Raider games. We wonder how many copies Eidos would have sold if the main character was a bearded bloke? Looking at the third version now, with no real improvement in the very average gameplay, Eidos have obviously found themselves a very reliable money-spinner. Let's be grateful that in the years since Lara first appeared, most other developers have stayed focussed on the gameplay.



er first, as opposed to a publisher if all you have is a concept and no technical skills. If you can program and have a working demo, then it's the other way around.

Secondly and most importantly, assume the person you are sending it to receives many such proposals. Prepare your submission in such a way that it will get their attention

from just a quick look over your covering letter, and don't send them dozens of pages of ideas, story and generally heavy stuff that looks like work to go through. Generally it's best to send it to the Marketing Manager. You can do anything you want in this world, you just need a break, and that comes down to how well you sell yourself and your ideas.

It's all too good

Has this year been the biggest and best year gaming has ever had? I mean, the games so far this year have been awesome; Forsaken, Quake 2, Unreal, Starcraft, FIFA 98, Myth: The Fallen Lords and Motocross Madness. They are all just too much fun for a game. Plus the hardware; Voodoo2, PCI sound cards, 100MHz bus speeds, AGP graphics, what more could we expect? Games like Sin, Half Life and Tiberian Sun of course. So if this year hasn't been the biggest which one is?

**James
Internet**

Shots fired

I write to you regarding an article in PC PowerPlay (issue 30, November 1998, p.102). I expect to see reviews in your magazine, not ill-informed, personal opinions which alienate and portray a significant portion of the law-abiding public as idiots.

If PC PowerPlay does want Hunters/Shooters to feel as if they are immoral-idiots, then please don't stop there; there are other (minority) groups (gays, jews, women etc.) out there just waiting to be put down. You wouldn't want to single out just the hunters now?

It's interesting how games, in which the goal is to kill (innocent) people, are treated as no big deal, even fun, yet killing animals (according to your magazine/ March Stepnik) is only for nut-cases! (Logical thinkers are not necessarily PC PowerPlay reviewers!).

How is it that Matt Adamsons at Hyperactive managed to review the same game without insulting Hunters/Shooters. As a side note (assuming M. Stepnik is not a vegetarian), how cute was the lamb, calf, piggy etc. before its throat was slashed, so that the masses (including perhaps M. Stepnik) could have a feed?

As M. Stepnik wrote: "if you start biting at things, they will bite back".

P.S. Shooters also use computers, some many even buy your magazine again (but not if they're portrayed as immoral idiots).

Research the topic first.

Check out: www.ssaa.org.au

**DC
Internet**

We called it as we saw it. Like you

Ben... erm... lapping another car in Johnny Herbert's GP (see letter What a pack of losers)



just did. Isn't freedom of speech a beautiful thing?

Install Nazis

I raced out and brought Grand Prix Legends (GPL) the day after reading the review in your mag. and playing the demo for a few hours (trying to shave the extra hundredth of a second off my lap time.) The game is great, but I have a problem with the way Sierra control things.

1. They insist that all Sierra games must be a sub directory of the main \Sierra directory. Why? Is it some lamer's idea of advertising? You shouldn't be forced to install a game in any directory, we have the technology. Give us, the customer, some freedom.

2. The Sierra Update on the Start menu. Why? Do they think that people won't see the icon if the put it in the Sub menu off the start button with the rest of the game. It's messy and I don't like it.

Please feel free to flame me for saying so (and I know I can fix these things by editing the start menu and the registry to remove the need for the \Sierra directory, but the point is, I shouldn't have to) but these little 'communist policies' of Sierra really get up my nose. I don't know of any other software company that give games so much annoying shit, with every game.

Rodney McLaren

Damn right, it does suck and suck hard. Other hates are: having a game install DirectX without asking first, games which drop you back to the Win 95 desktop in 640 x 480, games

which make you start with a desktop res. of 640 x 480, Uninstall programs that leave the menu item in the Start menu and games which install demos without asking. Nazis, all of them.

What a pack of losers

I know that you probably won't publish this but why do your reviewers suck? Looking at just about all the racing sim screen shots and they say 10/10 or 13/15. With all the games being reviewed you would at least think you would be good. Without all criticism you have a sick mag!

**Mitchell Palmowski
Internet**

This is the first time we've been sent a letter about this, and frankly I'm amazed it hasn't happened before! It's like this: we're actually incredibly skilled at all things, and routinely beat all games within an impressively short time. Most racing game screenshots are done here in the PCPP office, because most racing game reviews are done by full-time PCPP staff, cos we love them. We load it up, and go for a drive, with Malcolm the Wonder Art Director's finger on the screenshot key, when he sees something pretty he takes a pic, which pauses the game for a second, causing us to spin off. Ignoring our protests, Malcolm insists we drive on. By the end of a screenshotting session we're coming last and Malcolm has all the pics he needs, walking off with an evil laugh because he gets to make us look like wallys. Malcolm has been instructed to 'doctor' all future racing screenshots so that we're always winning.

Wholistic gaming

If anyone takes a step back at the way most people in the western society entertain themselves, they'll see that there is a change in the air. This change, I believe, is much like the body becoming tolerant to a new and funky narcotic. Sure, it's pretty damn trippy at first, but soon the effects wear off, and you're left with a pretty empty experience at the end of it.

If you look at movies, people are no longer satisfied by a Hollywood Special Effects extravaganza, with 2D sprite-like characters and "follow the dotted line" plot. I mean, look what Face/Off achieved. There was a cool movie with great action, characters AND *gasp* story!! You can see gamers wanting the same thing in their games as they do in their movies. And that is a gaming experience with meat. Just look at the stir that games like Half Life, Sin and Homeworld are producing. And (at the time of writing this letter) they haven't even been released yet.

Finally, a trend shall be set. Finally, game developers are going to further the use of their imaginations to incorporate a wholistic gaming experience, and not just a thrill or two with high graphic technology. Finally, we gamers will not be patronised by games that attempt to tease us with fabbo-eye-munchies, and skimp on the brain-food.

Finally it might just be worth locking myself indoors for a Complete Gaming Experience.

**Cam Elkins
Internet**

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COMPETITIONS

HERCULES TERMINATOR S3 SAVAGE

What a tasty bit of hardware this is. S3's new Savage 3D accelerator is your ticket to fast and sexy gaming. We've done a bit of a write-up in Tech News this month, check it out. Up for grabs is the Savage-based Hercules Terminator. For it to be yours, just answer this incredibly easy question and hope you're that your envelope is the one the Barrel Girl's hand lands on.

Q. How many labours did Hercules have?



POWERSLIDE

Great game, damn great game. Read the review and believe every word. Besides being Australian, Powerslide also happens to be a world-beating (that's a big stick!) racing sim that is untouchable fun for multiplayer, plus the AI is so advanced that the single player game feels like the real thing. You need!

Because Sharon at GTI is such a top chick, she let us have 6 copies for this comp. Yay Shaz!

Q. Who is Damon Hill's father and what is his claim to fame?

BALDUR'S GATE

Several issues ago we ran a Fallout competition that had as the prize, the winner appearing in Fallout 2. Yes, IN THE GAME. We have a winner, his name is Cameron Rapmund and a character named after him is in Fallout 2... somewhere. So, here's the new competition, find Cameron Rapmund! Just tell us where you found him! The first 10 correct entries drawn will win a copy of Interplay's forthcoming RPG Baldur's Gate.

Q. Where's Cameron Rapmund in Fallout 2?



NOVALOGIC'S MiG 29 & F16

Mmmmmm... We do like a good Combat Flight Sim. NovaLogic do too, that's why they've spent the last few years making good ones. Here are two more. MiG 29 and F16 look as pretty as hell and have enough realism to satisfy the good Major. You want.

Electronic Arts, in their infinite wisdom, have given us 4 copies of each. So, four readers who manage to answer this typically tough question will win a copy of each.

Q. What is the common term for the F-16's 100% digital flight control system?

WHERE TO SEND

Write the answer, along with your name and address on the back of an envelope.

All entries close January 13, 1998

Entries to:
PC PowerPlay,
78 Renwick St.
Redfern NSW 2016

Issue # 30 winners

MOTOCROSS MADNESS

Q. Who was 'Australia's own Evel Knievel' and how did he die?

A. Dale Buggins, suicide.

J Dean, Geelong VIC

L. Corbridge, Mt Morgan QLD

P Hill, Research VIC

S Charalambous, Greenvale VIC

M Stead, Nth Richmond NSW

B Cogan, Legana TAS

WARLORDS 3

Q. What was the name of the dragon in 'The Hobbit'?

A. Smaug, Smaug the Golden, or Smaug the Magnificent.

P Stewart, Unanderra NSW

T Kelly, Sunshine Beach QLD

P Tate, Goonellabah NSW

B Bate, Matraville NSW

A Moyawad, Harris Park NSW

T Sherlock, Frankston VIC

COLIN McRAE RALLY

Q. Who is Colin McRae's navigator?

A. Nicky Grist

D. Bronsema, Riddells Creek VIC

I Sandaljian, Southport QLD

D Elkington, Coal Point NSW

J Gunn, Bundaberg QLD

J New, Adamstown Hts NSW

P Marciano, Bull Creek WA

RAILROAD TYCOON

The sequel is finally here, but if you're into strategy games, this is right up there with Civ as the best ever

Developer: Microprose

Year: 1990

Requirements: 286, 1MB RAM, CGA Graphics

Recommended: Sound Blaster, EGA/VGA Graphics

The early nineties could possibly be described as the "Golden Age" of gaming. It was a time when genres were being forged in talented programmers' minds. It was a time when almost any idea was a good one. Even so, the idea that a game based on building little trains and having them trundle around in your own little virtual world raking in money was somewhat laughable to a few sceptics - until of course they played it.

Railroad Tycoon is one of the very few strategy games of any type which has literally been so brilliant that it has created a new archetype and has stood alone as the only game of its type for almost a decade. Transport Tycoon was undoubtedly the closest rival (until this very issue in fact) but the total lack of ability to dabble in stocks and shares made it somewhat dull in comparison to its much older counterpart. Now we have Railroad Tycoon 2, but it has been a very long time coming - even the mighty Civilization spawned a sequel before it. This alone proves that Railroad Tycoon has stood the test of time, and you can see from the sequel that the basic formula has remained virtually untouched. Even after all these years, no one has had a better idea.

What originally may look like a dull topic proved to be so enthralling and engrossing that you couldn't put it down until you had every train running like clockwork, every station taken over and the enemy in tatters, all on the highest skill level. Railroad Tycoon is a strange game in that it has novelty value, but when that wears off you find the rock solid gameplay behind it which just



Oh, but it was a beautiful game. Simple to get into, addictive as all hell, and almost impossible to master

goes on and on. It's little wonder that it was the brainchild of Sid Meier, perhaps the greatest of all strategists.

Graphically, Railroad Tycoon caters for all hardware levels, CGA Graphics look terrible, yes, but they do exist. Even in EGA the game looked quite acceptable, especially for 1990 standards.



You could definitely tell what was what, and the interface was spot on, as were the difficulty levels, the sound support and, of course, everything else.

Looking back on it now, the way your heart would begin to skip a few beats if the station you were taking over almost slipped

from your grasp, or as you desperately bought shares so your investors didn't vote you out of office you have to wonder if we really have gone anywhere in the last eight years?

Sure, things are bigger and brighter, but are games any better? It's a hard question to answer, and it's probably best typified by Railroad Tycoon 2. Look at what has been changed - we have some very nice 3D terrain, more trains, more options, more buildings, more complexity and the addition of some scenarios,

but when it all boils down to it, the same essence of gameplay from the original is captured again. That monumental task alone is probably one reason it took eight years for someone brave enough to develop a sequel. Thank goodness they got it right.

Railroad Tycoon is the perfect example of when someone has an idea which could be either stunningly brilliant, or pitifully awful. Sid Meier built this game to perfection, and even all these years on this (along with Civilization) is his crowning glory. The perfect Strategy Game is Railroad Tycoon, and we do not say that lightly.

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